

M. KAPLAN DIARIES - TRANSCRIPTION

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1925 NOV 1 - 1926 SEP 15

that the letter conveyed the real purpose for which he wanted to see me. He promised to touch upon the real purpose of our interview later. Later meant one and a half hours afterwards.

I could see toward the end of his monologue that he was picking up a thread of thought which would give him a chance to evoke from me an expression of my view as to whether I identified God with the social phenomena of life, or believed in the reality of a transcendent Being apart from such phenomena. I made my position clear to him that while I believed in God as a transcendent Being I could not conceive of that Being having any meaning for us except through and in terms of human experience. The more real and immediate such experience is of the realities of life the more can we appreciate the spiritual values that signify God. The experience of reality is, in my opinion, as essential to experiencing God as the harp is for the production of music. The music is not evolved out of the harp but is conditioned by it. So our appreciation of the reality of God is not evolved out of our every day experience but conditioned by it.

At that point in the conversation - for such it became by this time - he asked his wife to leave the room as he had to take up with me a confidential matter. He then came out with the question whether I was ready, as Morganstern had intimated to him, to become a member of the Hebrew Union College Faculty if I received an invitation to some chair in that college. I explained my situation to him in the same terms as I had to Morganstern. "I could go on working unhampered at the Seminary," I said, "but I feel that the Seminary was not altogether happy about my views on Judaism. I wanted therefore, a more congenial atmosphere, and thought that in view of the presentations made to me by Dr. Idelsohn I might find it in the Hebrew Union College.

He then told me that when he was in Cincinnati a week ago on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary, Morganstern told Schilman

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about the interview he had had with me at the Pennsylvania Hotel, and he asked Schulman what he thought of the idea of my going on the Faculty. Schulman told him that he thought very highly of me, but that he wanted to have a talk with me before he would express himself as to the advisability of inviting me to the College.

H.V.C. [As a result of our conversation Schulman was satisfied as he said that I "could bring a great deal of Jewishness to the College" and that from the standpoint of outlook upon Judaism I was perfectly satisfactory. He didn't state the latter part of his impression, but I could easily see that that was in his mind.] The main question into which the last part of our interview turned was the name to be given to the course. He of his own accord suggested that it be designated a course on the Philosophy of Judaism. That name had my hearty approval. A difficulty suggested itself in view of there being at present a chair in Jewish Theology occupied by Cohen. The question was how to avoid trespassing of his field. The matter was left in abeyance. He thought it could easily be straightened out. Toward the end he promised he would write to Morganstern the coming Wednesday. I left him at 6:50.

This evening I met for the first time this year a group of Seminary students with whom I am taking up the reading and discussion of books on religion. The book reported on tonight was Shotwell's Religious Revolution. Goldman gave a summary and criticism of it. The greater part of the session however was spent in the discussion of the indifference displayed by the students toward the problem of religion as such. Of the ten men that were present the majority admitted that they can't pray, that the term God is empty of content for them. They saw in the ministry nothing but an occasion for preaching nationalism and social service. I was terribly upset by this failure

Kap met religious
needs of students who came
from other back grounds even
though they rejected them. No one
else that really dealt w religious
issues. Hirsch met this
need in 50's & 60's - for
people w/o back grounds.

of the men to realize the terrible crime they were perpetuating by permitting themselves to go on thinking that way, without any qualms of conscience which should at least goad them on to delve deeply into the problem of religion. Instead of that they are satisfied to be graduated as rabbis and to accept positions as spiritual leaders with all that doubt and cynicism rankling in their hearts. I implored them to face the problem seriously, to deprecate the present attitude of contempt for the two or three men who do display an interest in religion, to pledge themselves to the study of religion. Goodman pleaded that they have not the leisure for that kind of study. With the numerous hours of attendance with another ten hours of preparation, and with the twelve to fifteen hours of teaching they have not a free moment for reading, study and discussion of the fundamental problem of religion. I was non-plussed by their expression of helplessness. All I could suggest was that at least these Sunday night sessions be spent with profit from a religious point of view.

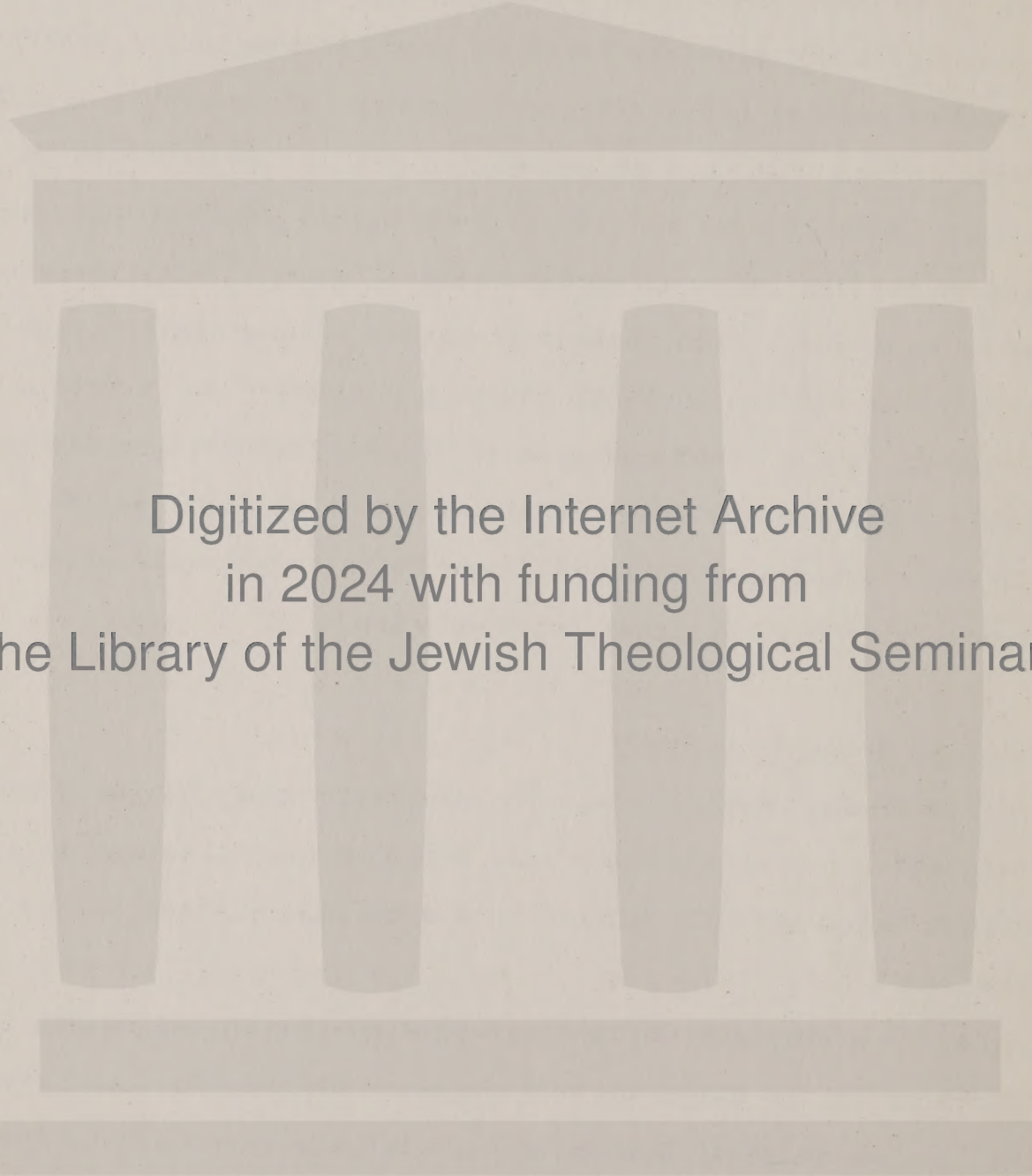
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Wednesday, November 4, 1925

Monday morning I went to see David Brown to learn what it was that prompted him to eliminate the reference to Palestine in the harmony resolution which he quoted in the circular letter issued from his office.

The spacious offices occupied by the United Jewish Campaign (downstairs in the lobby it is designated United American Jewish Campaign) in the Pershing Sq. Building, with the words U.J.C. and David Brown, National Chairman on the door as you enter, provoked me with their ~~resemblance~~ resemblance to an efficient advertising concern into resentment against the mechanization of the spirit of charity. After waiting a few minutes I was ushered in by a neat and prim woman secretary into

Kap wants
Sem. students
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the presence of Brown. During the course of the conversation he had occasion to press one button or another of a row of buttons connected with wires to different offices. As soon as a button would be pressed, the desired secretary would appear with the mechanical movements of a robot. I had to laugh inwardly at the way Fromenson who was called three times appeared with machine like promptness, now from one door, now through another, each time Brown pressed the buzzer for him to bring in some desired papers.

Brown opened the conversation by telling me that I was the victim of propaganda. He certainly struck it right that time. He proved to me that he was responsible for the release to all the newspapers of the country of the first piece of news about the harmony resolution, and that in that news there was not the omission of a single syllable. He gave me a copy of the pamphlet he wrote ~~xx~~ on his recent visit to Palestine. I felt that I could not question his interest in the rebuilding of Palestine. On the other hand, his charging Wise with machinations and dramatic playing to the galleries apparently for the purpose of becoming the president of the World Zionist Organization, seemed to be borne out by a number of facts which I could not refute, although I cannot see why Wise should want to antagonize the Marshalls and the Warburgs if he cherishes the ambition to be president of the Zionist Organization. Every time I learn about the low politics to which so called spiritual leaders resort I feel as though I had a mudbath.

I had occasion to give expression in the course of the session at the Seminary to a thought which has since brought me a good deal of illumination. I told the men that I was endeavoring to get them to do for Judaism what the educators had been urging as essential in the teaching of children, namely, to identify the realities denoted by the words used. As religious teachers our main business is to find the

Zionist
Facts

the reality behind the word God. But we must not expect to find that reality forthwith. We do our duty when we devote some thought each day to the task of arriving at the reality: God is in our search for Him.

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Wednesday, November 11, 1925

Last Saturday afternoon Dr. Schulman was at my house. I had gone to see him in reference to the letter he wrote me.

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Sunday night, November 22, 1925

H.U.C. Dr. Schulman told me that he had written to Morgenstern that in view of the friendly relations between himself and the two seminaries he was not in a position to make any recommendations that might be prejudicial to the interests of the Seminary. He accordingly confined himself to an objective description of what he regarded as my qualifications. From what I could gather he gave Morgenstern quite an accurate account of my views on the Bible, God, Israel, etc. He made it clear to Morgenstern that the impression that I had weakened on my nationalism and that I had lost interest in the SAJ was unfounded. Personally Schulman told me that if I would make up my mind to go to Cincinnati I would revolutionize the HUC. Nevertheless he warned me that I must be prepared for a great deal of unpleasantness. A man like Phillipson, if he would understand me (by this statement S. meant to imply that Ph. was not over intelligent) and would realize how intense a nationalist I was would go up in the air.

Last Monday night I was in Cleveland. I had accepted Goldman's invitation to address his newly formed men's club. My main object in going was to make another attempt to organize an SAJ chapter there. The group that I tried to persuade to form ~~themselves~~ themselves into an SAJ chapter the last time I was there did not materialize

because the more prominent among them objected to committing themselves to the Palestine program. Goldman organized that group into a study circle.

There were about 250 men present. My subject was "Judaism As a Civilization." The majority followed the lecture with a great deal of interest. The lecture was held at the lecture hall of the Jewish Center and was preceded by a dinner.

The most interesting part of the evening was the one spent at Goldman's home after the lecture where Rabbi Silver (Abba Hillel), Brickner and Birnbaum joined us. It was the first time that I had occasion to meet Silver face to face. He made an excellent impression on me. There is a certain softness and simplicity of manner that one does not ~~meet~~ meet as a rule in the American Rabbi. Joined to these qualities he possesses a genuine interest in Jewish knowledge and a serious attitude toward the problem of Judaism. He is vitally concerned in the religious element in Judaism despite his strong nationalistic leanings.

After considerable discussion as to what we might do co-operatively, we came to the conclusion that the best thing to do would be to hold a two week conference at the beginning of the summer. To that conference we would invite graduates of both seminaries who are discontent with the policy of drift in conservatism and with the anti-nationalism of reform. There would be no attempt made to formulate any third party program, but simply to work out the implications for the various aspects of Jewish life of the view of Judaism as a civilization.

After that we discussed what should be our attitude toward the \$15,000,000 drive. We agreed that the outstanding wrong of the Marshall Brown group consisted in the postponement of their participation in the Palestine Campaign.

A. H.
Silver

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Tuesday I was in Pittsburgh. At the station I was met by Rabbis Lichter and Hailpern. Rabbi Rose who was mainly responsible for my coming was prevented from meeting me. On the way to Rose's house Lichter and Hailpern complained to me of Rose's playing the Orthodox rabbi. Rabbi Goldman had apprised me of that fact in Cleveland.

That day Rosenbloom's body had been brought from New York where he died. He was a peculiar type of Jew. He originally became well to do through the distillery business, but prohibition brought him immense wealth. With that he clung to the Maimonidean philosophy of Judaism and would have financed any chair in a university in which Maimonideism could be taught effectively. Of late he gave considerable contributions to the Seminary and to the University in Jerusalem.

Having come to Pittsburgh I considered it my duty to pay my respects to the remains.

In the evening Rabbi Rose showed me the school which is attended by over 300 children. They have sessions daily from 4-6 and from 6-8, in the same way as they have in the lower East Side Talmud Torahs. The Jews of his congregation still believe sufficiently in Judaism to consider giving such intensive Jewish training the normal thing. When I opened the doors of the various classrooms I had to beat a retreat because of the foulness of the air. The teachers with the exception of the two women teachers did not know enough to allow the fresh air to come into the room. And that kind of air the little tots are expected to breathe for two hours daily, and then to walk distances of a half mile and over to their homes through dark deserted streets.

At night I addressed a gathering of about 250 people in the Beth Hamidrash. Rabbi Goldenson and Rabbi Metz, a Seminary graduate who never took up the rabinate but went into business instead, were among the auditors.

My talk dealt with the need of making Jewish study the foremost duty of Jewish life. This was a propaganda talk for an SAJ chapter. The people had in no way been prepared for this kind of a talk and Rose did nothing to start any kind of organization work. I felt that the evening was wasted.

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Tuesday, December 15, 1925

About two weeks ago I received a letter from Morgenstern which put an end to any illusions I may have entertained of emancipating myself from the spiritually stifling environment of the Seminary.

Morgenstern says Karp
The letter reenforced my fears which I began to harbor ever since I had the interview with Schulman that I would be even more alone and unhappy in the Hebrew Union College than I am here. Morgenstern's letter is quite frank though friendly. [He says, "I have very reluctantly come to the conclusion that we are still too far apart in our envisaging of Judaism's problem and in the solution of it which we would offer, to permit me to do that which my own personal feeling makes no desire strongly to do."] That conclusion, he says, he arrived at after having carefully read the little book which I published last year. A New Approach to the Problem of Judaism pub. by the S.A.J.

popular from Reform circles

Last Saturday and Sunday we celebrated the dedication of the renovated SAJ House. Both the services on Saturday and the Dinner on Sunday night went off successfully.

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January 28, 1926

The dinner of the T.I. Alumni in celebration of the Bar Mitzvah year of their existence which took place at the Seminary on

Sunday, December 20 was not very much of a success. One of those present (Prashker) reminded me that at the opening of the T.I. which took place at the Uptown T.T. I centered my remarks on the text and compared the present day chaos in Jewish life to the state of lawlessness and despondency which existed in Israel at the time the ark was carried off by the Philistines. The gloom which the Alumni celebration cast upon me led me to repeat those words of the text and to call attention to the fact that the "ark of the Lord" is not yet with us.

The disheartening state of affairs has been further brought home to me by the failure of the attempt I made during the last month to organize a group of people who would make themselves responsible for the maintenance of Hebrew periodical literature. The publication of the Hashilvach has been interrupted on account of lack of funds. I thought that by inviting a number of people who have some interest in Hebrew I might solve the problem of the Hashilvach and at the same time create the nucleus of an organization to encourage other Hebrew publications. After two or three sparsely attended meetings I discontinued the work because only one man reported at the last meeting for which about forty or fifty invitations had been sent out.

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Wednesday, February 17, 1926

On January 31 (Sunday) I was at Detroit where I addressed about four or five hundred people gathered at the Annual Community Dinner of that city. Usually the purpose of such a dinner which is given by the United Hebrew Charities of Detroit is to celebrate the achievement of the United Hebrew Charities or to collect funds for philanthropic needs. This time the purpose of the Dinner was to acquaint the Jews of Detroit with the joint drive which was to be undertaken within a few weeks. In this drive, the appeal for Reconstruction

Work in Russia (United Jewish Appeal) the United Palestine Appeal and the local appeal for Talmud Torah funds, are to join efforts. This is, I believe, the only joint drive of its kind in the country. Everywhere else the effort to unite the Palestine and the Russian Campaigns has failed.

I left New York for Detroit on Saturday night at 6:10 and arrived in Detroit at 2:40 the next day. I was met at the station by Rabbi Hershman and a number of his followers and friends with whom I became acquainted last year when I spoke on Jewish education at Cleveland. Together with them was Mr. Isaacs the principal of the United Talmud Torah Schools, a rather pale-looking watery eyed bespectacled man in the thirties. It was his telegram together with Waldman's that persuaded me to make the trip to Detroit, though I must admit that the fact that I would have had to waste Sunday evening by attending the banquet that was given to Prof. Davidson on the occasion of his departure to Palestine played no small part in my decision to accept the Detroit invitation.

Hershman had to leave me as soon as I got to the hotel. I invited the others to my room. They told me at once about their having federated with the United Hebrew Charities so that the Talmud Torahs would henceforth receive support from the united drives and campaigns. I told them that I thought well of their having united with U.H. Charities, taking Dushkin's experience in Chicago as a criterion. They seemed to be in doubt as to the wisdom of having gone in with people whom they regard as "assimilators." Later in the evening Hershman expressed himself to me as strongly opposed to their having gone in with the Charities crowd because he was afraid the Talmud Torah people would lose their individuality and identity among them, and surrender ~~them~~ some of the most important prerogatives in Jewish educational work.

At the dinner I found myself at the same table with the president of the U.S. Charities, Prof. Sharfman, Mr. Waldman and Rabbi Brickner. I was the first one to be called upon to speak and delivered an address in Jewish education. It was well received. I had the opportunity of having it broadcasted, but I refused to do so. The subject was too sacred and too intimate and I wanted the freedom to tell them some unpleasant truths. Why then have the rest of the world know our troubles?

I was followed by Brickner who [~] wanted on Zionism and Palestine. He made an effort to be witty and oratorical, stressed unduly the last consonants of each word, and in general, played for effect more than for solid persuasion. The few whose opinion I heard did not seem to be well impressed. On leaving the hall Hershman met me. He expressed his disgust with Brickner, with the rabbinate, with the world in general. When I mentioned to him that due to my efforts quite a few students at the Seminary took up the rabbinate who otherwise would have adopted some other calling, he remarked "I question whether they ought to thank you for it." Of his own members, he said that they have deteriorated considerably during the last ten years. Giving a certain Mr. Simon as an instance, he said that ten years ago that man was modest and reserved in his opinions, knowing enough to plead ignorance when some complicated problem was presented to him. However Simon is an authority on ever ~~matt~~ moot Jewish question. It appears that Rabbi Franklin is an awful thorn in Hershman's side. From what the student Parzen tells me Franklin has benefited by Hershman's negligence and failure to appeal to the young. Franklin has opened up classes for adults. The number attending has been as high as 600. That is certainly an unusual achievement provided it can be kept up. Hershman on the other hand, charges those of his people who send their children to Franklin's Sunday school with being social climbers.

Rabbi Neulander showed such incompetence in his work at the SAJ that I was compelled to ask him to resign. I have no one to blame but myself for having engaged him. I really do not know what made me ask him to accept the position. Probably it was the anxiety to be relieved once in a while of preaching that rendered me uncritical and led me to give easy credence to the report that he had been successful in his position at Flushing. Thank God we are rid of him. He cost the SAJ an extra \$1800 for releasing them from the moral obligation to keep him to Oct. 1. I have secured the services of S. Dinin, a graduate of the Teachers Institute who has been specializing in Jewish education work with Dr. Benderly. He has been strongly recommended to me as a hard worker and conscientious. I can breathe more freely now. If Neulander had remained much longer the SAJ would have become demoralized. He almost succeeded in ruining the religious school, and all the other activities were becoming ~~more~~ dormant.

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Thursday, February 18, 1926

On the occasion of the dedication of the new quarters of the SAJ at 13-15 W. 86 St. I formulated the principles of the SAJ in terms of thirteen "wants." My purpose in those principles is to convey that at the present time it is impossible to agree upon abstract principles, but it is possible to agree as to what differences in our lives the fact of being Jews should make. I believe that stating the principles of Judaism in that way should prove an excellent means of transferring the interest from something that can no longer function to something that can. Beliefs cannot function as a means of Jewish unity. Let us, however, learn to make demands upon Jewish unity and Jewish unity will be strengthened through the effort to have it meet those demands.

So enthusiastic was I ~~when~~ when I drew up those "wants," that I went to ask Herman Bernstein to ask him to insert them in the

Jewish Tribune and to invite discussion. They did not draw forth a single letter of approval or disapproval. Naturally I have not felt elated over this indifference to what I consider a helpful suggestion in meeting the problem of Jewish dogma. Probably I expected too much. Those principles should have been accompanied by an article setting forth their meaning and implications. Having appeared but once in that base form they could not possibly make a dent on the readers' minds.

The last five Sabbaths I departed from the usual routine of sermonizing on some text from the Sidrah and have been giving an exposition of the thirteen "wants." I must say that I have succeeded better than I ever did before in popularizing the conception of Judaism as an ethical and spiritual civilization. After explaining the reason for couching the principles of Jewish life in terms of wants I have taken up the discussion of education, the conception of the past and the home from the standpoint of reconstruction which they have to undergo. I expect to deal next with the community and Palestine work as in need of being differently conceived if they are to help us live more efficiently as Jews.

I have asked the people in the audience to send in questions on the subjects I have been discussing. So far I have received one letter from a non-member, who being a kosher butcher takes advantage of the services without feeling the least responsibility of helping along in the defrayal of the SAJ work. In his letter to me which I received this week he writes as follows: "Your sermons dealing with the platform of your SAJ have been very interesting. I would like to know if you have omitted from your so called "Wants" the unquestionable importance of "minion" in order to conduct services, especially for the entire Sabbath service. The reason for my asking this question is that I have noticed from time to time the failure which the service

has had to meet with because of no attendance. Is there any special reason for there not being a light over the "Ark" which is seen in all other synagogues." It seems that most of the people I talk to need plain lessons in civilization rather than high-falutin discourses on Judaism as a civilization.

Once in a while I get an encouraging word. This time it came from an unexpected quarter. H.L. Simmons who has been inactive in the SAJ since he laid down the chairmanship, came to see me during the last week in January. Having attended a Sabbath service at which he heard me preach on the principles of the SAJ he was taken aback by the criticism of one or two of the members which were directed at some of the statements I had made about the traditional conception of Judaism. He came to tell me that I was not working with the right group of people. There was but one way to overcome that difficulty and that was for the few who understood and sympathized with my efforts to contribute large amounts toward the SAJ so as to make it unnecessary for the SAJ to admit a lot of people who had no comprehension of ~~what~~ the SAJ stood for. Knowing ~~how busy he had been of late~~ how busy he had been of late, I thought it was very kind of him to show such interest in me and my work. All my resentment against him for having stayed away from the SAJ melted away and I began to think that after all if people hadn't been so preoccupied with their business and with the need for recreation, they would have given more time and attention to ideal interest.

The work at the Seminary this year has given me an opportunity to organize more clearly my conception of God. I find myself at present believing in God as the Living Universe. The evil in the world is due to chance, which is as necessary to reality as the negative is necessary to the positive. Is God finite or infinite? The

question is either meaningless or irrelevant. God is all that there is. God grows and can never attain the limit of his growth for there is nothing to limit that. Growth means invading the domain (if such it may be called) of non-being.

God feels
It appears to me that God feels with infinitely greater keenness whatever of evil there is in the world, for the more life or mind the more pain. Why should the fact that God suffers in any way prevent me from trusting in him? Would the infant when sick be justified in not looking to its mother for help if it were to know that its mother suffers more keenly than it does?

Hocking
The group of about fifteen who have been coming every other week to my house and with whom I have been reading "Hocking" as a result of the discussions seem to become imbued with an appreciation of what the rabbinate should mean.

Benderly
Last Monday night I attended a farewell dinner given to Unterberg. The only thing of interest to me was the fact that I had a good long talk with Benderly whom I had not seen since I left for Palestine. He had a perfect right to resent my failure to see him in all the time that I have been back in this country, but he is too good a man to harbor resentment against me.

He impressed me as a very much discouraged man. As Lena remarked "Gone was the smile which in former days always played about his features." The conversation with him had a devastating effect upon me. As it was I had been having the blues all that day and his talk only aggravated them. In former years I would go to him as to a father confessor and always go away refreshed in spirit. What a tragic change!

His wife once said to him that he ought to divorce her and her children so that he might be free to speak his mind and do what he thinks ought to be done for the Jewish people. That it has come

On Sunday, Feb. 7, I spoke at Philadelphia. The occasion was an educational conference under the auspices of the United Synagogue. My subject was Jewish Education. The address was delivered to a semi-intelligent crowd at the Bnai Jeshurun Synagogue. A good many of the Philadelphia rabbis were present. ^{Adler's} ~~Adler's~~ presence annoyed me very much because he and I think and speak in different worlds of discourse.

Critical of United Syn.

I really should not have accepted the invitation to speak under the auspices of the United Synagogue. That organization to my mind is a growing menace to Jewish life because of its tendency to discourage all intellectual honesty and to paralyze all efforts at adjusting Judaism to the spiritual needs of the present time. In fact I had the courage to turn down Sam Cohen's request to come to Chicago for the purpose of addressing the mid-west convention which took place there in January. I was doubly glad that I did not go, when I learned later that he roped in a number of orthodox congregations into the mid-west branch of the United Synagogue and that he was representing the organization as orthodox.

Down on Schiff & Adler

[Three individuals are chiefly responsible for obstructing the growth of a healthily functioning and creative Judaism. They are Jacob H. Schiff, Cyrus Adler and Samuel M. Cohen. The first a great financier, an opinionated German Jew with little understanding of the problem of Judaism; the second a well meaning martinet with no vision or imagination; the third a successful ward politician.]

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Monday, February 22, 1926

A certain Miss Ziegler, who is a nurse by profession, came to see me with reference to inducting her into the Jewish faith. She was born a Christian to parents of Pennsylvania Dutch extraction and she is now engaged to be married to a Jewish physician, Dr. Horowitz. She gave as her reason for wanting to become a Jewess the fact that she

realizes that if there are to be children they would have to be given some kind of religious upbringing. In order that there be harmony in the home both father and mother had to be of one mind on the question of religion. Since she sympathized with the Jewish faith, she was willing to accept it, and wanted me to proselyte her.

Disinclined as I am to making conversions, not as a matter of principle but simply out of an inborn inertia, I could find no excuse for referring Miss Ziegler to any one else to proselyte her. I therefore gave her certain books to read - Goddman's History of the Jews, Greenstone's on Jewish Religion, and Bildersees on Jewish History and told her to come to see me again together with Dr. Horowitz. They called last night. From what she said to me the first time I gathered that her fiance was indifferent whether she accepted the Jewish faith or not. It seems that he was afraid I might resent his attitude, and therefore spoke as though he was very much pleased at what she was doing. He mentioned that an uncle of his who was a strictly observant of Jewish practice approved of his marrying this girl since she was willing to accept Judaism. That uncle is using his influence to persuade the doctor's mother to give her full consent to the match.

The doctor told me he wanted his fiancée to acquire a knowledge of Yiddish. His folks speak Yiddish and he did not want that his fiancée should misgive that anything ill was being said of her in the course of their Yiddish conversation.

This is the second case of conversion that I have had in the course of my rabbinic experience. The first case occurred during my ministry at the Jewish Center. Drs. Kotkov and Jacob Kohn together with me constituted a Beth Din. The immersion took place in the pool of the Center. In order to conform to the letter of the law that two men witnesses must testify to the immersion, the young woman was garbed in a loose bathing suit. This time I expect to accept the testimony

Kap performed
conversions
Halachically
at
Center

of women witnesses. I am not certain that I shall get two rabbis to act as a Beth din on these terms.

Last night we had the second program meeting this year at the SAJ. The subject for discussion was "Whether Jewish nationalism is compatible with American citizenship." There were only seventy people present, due to many of our members being out of town for the weekend and others attending the ball given by the Grand Street Boys. Both Harry Liebovitz and Bromberg were getting cold feet when they learned of the number that would not come to the meeting. Nevertheless the meeting turned out to be the most successful of any we have had at the SAJ. Irving Rubin and Alex Lamport read short papers which showed a genuine attempt on their part to think about the question. This was followed by discussion from the floor. Eno, Siegel, Cohen, H. Leibovitz, Evelyn Garfiel, Moe Epstein took part in the discussion. Ben-Avi who came from Jerusalem happened to be present and he gave a lively touch to the discussion. For a time there was the danger of the discussion taking a wrong turn and degenerating into an attempt to prove that the work of upbuilding Palestine was compatible with Americanism. I prevented it taking that turn by pointing out that the question at issue was whether we could go on in consistency with our loyalty to America cultivating Judaism as a civilization and refusing to intermarry with our neighbors. Thanks to the unusual number of really able-minded people there was some real idea in every one of the short talks given by the speakers. It was the first time that an SAJ gathering was stimulating to me. I was especially interested to feel out how the thinking Jew would react to the idea of a different kind of Judaism for Palestine from that which was feasible in the Diaspora. To my surprise the speakers themselves seemed to assume such a difference as a matter of course. Secondly I wanted to test the effect of

suggesting that we may insist upon remaining a separate group only so long as other groups, like the Catholics, refuse to mingle with the rest of the American nation. I was glad to see that the suggestion was received favorably. Of course it may be due to my having coupled it with another idea that played up to their Jewish egotism, that it passed muster. The other idea was that no nationalism except the Jewish was exceptional in not being synonymous with a state and government, but with a type of cultural life.

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Thursday, February 25, 1926

Last Monday Miss Alice L. Seligsberg called to discuss the following questions:

"Desire for belief in - but inability to believe in - mercy as an attribute of God.

Overwhelming consciousness of the cruelties of God and man toward man and helpless animals.

Question whether there is any way of righting oneself with one's own sense of justice; and of making one's love of mankind sincere to the utmost degree."

These questions gave me an opportunity to test out my latest formulation of the God idea. Miss Seligsberg is a social worker, highly intelligent and beyond middle age in years. In her younger years she was a follower of Felix Adler's but Zionism brought her back to Judaism.

I explained to her that we must give up the habit of thinking of God as a being - absolute, perfect, omnipotent - standing outside of the universe. God is the universe viewed as a living organic reality. As the living universe God is infinitely more susceptible to pain and suffering than any of its infinitesimal elements. The evil is simply the imperfection of the universe. It is nobody's fault.

*evil is
Chance*
The universe is not so perfect or so potent as to have averted the evil which is simply the product of its own shortcoming plus the negative effect of chance. I gave her the analogy of the child and mother. It occurs to me that I might have added that the child no doubt at first thinks of its mother as all-powerful. When it is disillusioned it does not cease loving or appealing to its mother for help when in need. Why then should we cease turning in love and prayer to the Life and soul of the universe, so as to feel that we are not alone in an empty wilderness, so as to make some of the strength that upholds the universe part of ourselves.

Miss Seligsberg went away much comforted.

This morning I received a letter from Rabbi Mantinband of Poughkeepsie asking me to extend a helping hand to an unfortunate man who is a graduate of City College and who has become blind. Mantinband's letter included the letter he had received from Elkin. It reads as follows:

"Regarding your inquiries about C. C. I wish to say that after undergoing five operations on his eyes he regained a fair amount of vision and is able to read the newspaper every day with the aid of strong lenses. Of course his sight is far from normal. However, he has considerably better sight than I."

~~~~~~~~~  
In recent periods some changes have taken place at my home, changes which have made matters considerably worse. On May 28 my venerable father had a stroke of paralysis and on June 2 he passed away. On June 3, Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5684 he came to his eternal home. On July 5 while a friend of mine was taking me home from synagogue a taxi jumped on both of us, fractured his left leg and my right leg. What happened afterwards I cannot describe. Dante might have found enough material to write another Inferno...For the sake of my poor





mother who had grown blind, I insisted that they take me from the hospital. I passed many many sleepless nights in agony but did not utter a sigh. Many a time the thought entered my mind if the automobile had knocked me dead on the spot. Still when I saw my poor mother sit near my bed I felt that for her sake alone I had to survive and recover. After staying in bed for months I began to walk on crutches. Last month I changed my crutch for a cane but my locomotion is still far from normal. At every step I feel that I am using fractured bones... On Jan. 8 my poor mother fell ill and after staying in bed for 32 days (I was near her day and night) her noble heart came to a standstill on Feb. 9 (Chamish<sup>o</sup> Asar B'Shvat 5685) Now I am left all alone in this world with my unfortunate deaf mute sister.)

"It may be that Faith acts as the balm of Gilead and soothes all our wounds but the question is Where Can We Obtain It? Our college training, our training on the doctrines of evolution, our contact with Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Haeckel Buechner and Schopenhauer does not leave much room for religious faith and religious hopes. I can see before me the words of Dante: Abandon Hope All Ye who Enter Here....Fraternally yours, Samuel ben Z'vi Elkin."

The Thursday night class at the SAJ had the worst attendance of any this year. Only fourteen present. I had a competitor in the old lady Mrs. Liebovitz who sold theatre tickets for the Fuel and Aid Society Benefit which was given tonight.

In answer to Dr. Brand's statement that the presentation of Judaism as having gone through a slow evolutionary process is destructive of one's faith in Judaism I said that the evolutionary conception of Judaism restores to the Jew the past of which the denial of the miracles had deprived him.





Wednesday, March 3, 1926

For the first time in years I really enjoyed myself on Purim. The fact that I had gotten through satisfactorily with my sermon (the seventh of the series on the "Thirteen Wants") on Saturday morning and that I had no classes the day following at the Institute on account of the Purim festival made it possible for me to enter into the spirit of the day. I did something I had never done before. I masked at the SAJ masquerade given on Saturday night. At Judith's suggestion I wore the uniform of the KKK. On the hood I had a Mogen David instead of a cross. In it I had three "kofs"; over the chest I had in red letter Grand Koogler. Although a few had a suspicion that it was I who was masked as a KKK, they were thrown off their guard when I charlestoned down the room once or twice. I was even awarded a prize, a silver pencil. This tomfoolery went off without impairing my dignity in the least, even in the estimate of my friends who are overzealous of the proprieties touching my person.

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Last Sunday night I entertained the students of the Training School for Jewish Social workers - about eleven in all. Mr. Krapf the director of the school, was also present for a time, but had to leave because he wasn't feeling well. I tried to amuse them by reading from Sholom Aleichem, but I soon realized that they failed to understand enough of Yiddish to enjoy listening. Judith tried to have them sing Jewish songs; that too was not very successful. Everytime I attend or take part in any Jewish get together I am disheartened by the inability of our people to enjoy themselves as Jews. The lack of Jewish background simply makes it impossible for our people to play as Jews and without Jewish play I cannot see how there can be any Jewish life.

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Crisis - of First Temple  
from rise to Torah as Holy Book  
Second Temp - Rabbinism.

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Monday morning I met that same group in class. I concluded with them the course on Reconstruction of Judaism. For once I was satisfied that I had given one of my classes a completely rounded out conception of Judaism as well as a working program. Whether it is a workable program remains to be seen. I have this feeling about it.

*Jud. in Crisis* [We are passing through a crisis similar to the one experienced by our forbears after the destruction of the first and of the second commonwealth. This crisis will either make us or break us. If we will come through it safely it will be because we shall have achieved a world outlook and a method of living superior to those we are emerging from. Such an outcome would be analogous to that of the two great crises in the past.]

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At the meeting of the SAJ board I was pleased to hear Dinin suggest plans for organizing extension classes for children of the neighborhood who have no religious schooling whatever. The members of the Board were about to turn him down and I had to come to his defense. They grudgingly consented to let him go ahead. When it comes to doing anything actually constructive the members of the Board become awfully fussy and picayune, and display a thickheadedness that bowls me over.

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Last night I attended a small meeting of representatives of SAJ, Bnai Jeshurun, Temple Israel and Free Synagogue for the purpose of getting the Jews of this neighborhood to contribute toward the United Palestine Fund. It was really at my suggestion to Wise through Gray, the campaign manager for this neighborhood, that the meeting was called. In order, however, to get the Bnai Jeshurun congregation "to come across" the call was signed by Wise, Goldstein (rabbi of that congregation) and Harris. It was pre-arranged that Goldstein act as chairman. In his





This morning I took occasion to answer some of the questions contained in the work handed in weekly by the Seminary students on the lectures I give this year in Homiletics. I am lecturing on the pragmatic interpretation of some of the outstanding attributes of God. The questions which I tried to answer were brutally frank in their spirit of negation. One man asked "Why appeal to people to do their duty on the ground of a belief in God? Why not appeal on the basis of the mere worthwhileness of life?" Another man asked "Why should we be grateful for the forces in society that make for our happiness when those forces operate that way unintentionally."

In my answer I had occasion to make the following points:

*God & His system*

1. God in his essence is transcendent. As such he represents the mystery which we cannot help sensing behind the phenomena of the cosmos. Through his attributes, however, he is immanent. The ethical implications of religion are derived from God as immanent.

2. The attributes of God are simply aspects of reality which are inferred from the attitude of worthwhileness with which we face life, when we face it in a spirit of religion and of moral responsibility.

3. The so called ethical inferences from these attributes are not inferences in the logical sense, for then they would not be known before the premises from which they are inferred. As a matter of fact these ethical inferences are nothing more than the implications of the attributes stated explicitly. How little they are inferences in the logical sense may be seen from the fact that they may serve in the capacity of premises. For example, the sense of responsibility may be treated as the premise whence we derive the notion of God as helper. That is what Kant has done in making the sense of duty the sole proof for the existence of God.

4. Both the premises and the inferences in our discourse of God are merely implications not of intellectual statements of fact but of affirmative acts of the will.



loud and pompous fashion he started the discussion by asking whether it would not have been better to use the method of trade organization instead of the synagogue. He called upon most of the people present. Not until Wise asked my opinion did I get a chance to open my mouth. I pointed out that a Zionist campaign did not enjoy the advantage of the Federation or J.D. campaign in being able to enlist efficient "keymen" in the various trades, due to the fact that the usual keyman was not in sympathy with the effort to rebuild Palestine for the Jews. Moreover, it is the logical function of the synagogue to participate in the restoration of Palestine which is of such spiritual significance for our life as Jews. Wise later reenforced my argument by adding that if the synagogues surrendered to trade organizations the opportunity to help in the reconstruction of Palestine they would leave themselves no function or authority whatever in Jewish life. Furthermore, the work for Palestine affords a common meeting ground. For that reason alone the synagogues should engage in the campaign.

I fail to understand why Goldstein should behave with that hauteur toward me when as a matter of fact he probably learned more from me of that which has been of help to him in the ministry than from the other men in the faculty. It may be that I am laboring under a complex. From a psycho-analysts standpoint it is perhaps I who resent his upstart success. Granted. But is that a reason why he should have ignored my presence in his neighborhood during all the years that I have worked here? If I had a one time teacher of mine situated as I am I would have shown some evidence of courtesy. How men who lack  
p. 118 and are such egotistic careerists can infuse any new spiritual life into the shattered soul of Israel is more than I can see.

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Thursday, March 4, 1926

Dr. Poole of the Shearith Israel Congregation (Spanish and Portuguese) called on me this afternoon. As a result of a disagreement between him and his president that arose from the discontinuance of the free services on the High Holidays, the attention of the Board of Trustees was directed to the comatose condition of the congregation. They awoke to the fact that the congregation though financially in good condition was doing nothing either in a communal or in a Jewish way. Poole was called in to suggest some remedy. At his suggestion he was appointed the chairman of a committee consisting of members outside of the Board for the purpose of making a study as to what measures would help to put new life into his congregation. He went to see R. Rudolph Grossman and Israel Goldstein. I am the third man whom he interviewed. As a condition in organizing the committee he stipulated that no changes be made in ritual and in the manner of conducting the services.

I told him bluntly that the only thing that could shock his congregation into new life would be a new attitude toward Judaism. So long as he bound himself and them to Orthodoxy there was sure to be a gulf between their outlook on Judaism during six days of the week and their Jewish outlook on the seventh day. Instead of having their official status represent their everyday Jewish life at its best, the rabbis - of whom he was one - tolerated this unwholesome condition which smacked of hypocrisy. I was not even asking for the translation of religion into ethical terms of every day life. All that I insisted on was that there be one attitude toward Judaism on the part of his congregants both within and without the synagogue. He seemed to get my point of view but gave no indication of being won over to it. He wanted to get from me some of the specific "tricks" by which I was able to induce the SAJ members to make large contributions toward Keren Hayesod, Seminary, etc.



In the course of the conversation I suggested to him that he ought to give up the Portugese Synagogue and accept a position with some live congregation. He answered that his people were at ~~least~~ least gentlemen, whereas in any of the "live" congregations he would have to deal with the "nouveau riches."

\* \* \*

Tuesday, March 9, 1926

*Prophetic mood vs Rabbini mood*

In my sermon last Sabbath I voiced the inner conflict under which I am laboring. Very few in the audience, I suppose, suspected that fact. I contrasted the prophetic mood with the rabbinic mood as expressed in the respective attitudes toward Israel on the part of the prophets and of the Rabbis. Moses, Elijah, Isaiah were ever ready with their resignations. They despaired of Israel. The Rabbis glorified Israel and condemned the prophets for their lack of faith in Israel. When Elijah came to Horeb he ~~headed~~ headed in his resignation to God. The Rabbis characterized him as an informer for telling God that Israel destroyed his altars and killed his priests.

Which is the more ethical and spiritual course to follow? That is the problem with which I am forever wrestling.

*It's philosophy*

Every time I have occasion to explain to the students the implications of Judaism as a civilization, I cannot help feeling that I have as definite a program for Judaism in America as any is possible under present circumstances. The pity of it is that I am prevented by my connection with the SAJ to give to that program the time that it requires to be written out carefully and in detail. Yet I suppose there must be some value in being associated with a lay group if I am to realize the difficulty of trying to resuscitate Jewish life even provisionally in this country.





March 9, 1965-6

Yesterday Glucksman the Executive Director of the Jewish Welfare Work called together with an associate of his. He asked me to prepare a paper on the place of the Jewish Center in Jewish life for the coming conference of Jewish Social Workers which is to take place in Cleveland on May 24. I cannot make up my mind whether or not to accept the invitation.

*Bialik*  
*+ Kaplan*

Today's meeting of the Trustees of the Matz Foundation had an element of unusual interest due to the presence of Bialik, the great Jewish national poet and Sokolow the greatest Hebrew publicist. Bialik's talk savors of the poetic though his appearance is very commonplace. Sokolow is an inexhaustible fountain of causerie and wit. Bialik not only recognized me but recalled distinctly having met me in Jerusalem as well as in Tel Aviv. For the moment I thought he had made a mistake, then I recalled having met him at the reception given by Herbert Sammel on the eve of the opening of the University. Sokolow seemed hurt that I had not come to see him in all the weeks that he had been here. He is leaving for Africa in three days. He is certainly a marvelous man. Among great nations he would have figured as one of the great makers of history. Among us, especially here in America, he is hardly understood, much less appreciated. When I think of H.L. Simmons turning up his nose at the suggestion I made a couple of weeks ago that Sokolow be met by some of our people, I say to myself "What a stupid people our Jews are. They don't deserve a man like Sokolow. Give them some leather lunged mouthing orator who takes well with the Goyim, but who otherwise has not an original idea in his head, and they will dance around him as our ancestors did around the golden calf."

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Wednesday, March 10, 1926

I saw Adler today to get his sanction for the permission to be given to teachers of the Institute who wished to make the trip to Palestine to take off either the last two months or the first two months of the academic year in addition to the summer vacation so that they may have enough time to look around when the climate is not over hot. He said he would put the matter before the Seminary Board though he did not expect any one there to object. The second matter I discussed with him was the English text of the academic diploma to be granted to the graduates of the Institute who do not take the professional course. This diploma should have been awarded last June, but there was considerable fuss on the part of the staff with regard to the Hebrew text, and the English text was beyond their power altogether. The members of the Institute staff, especially Bavli and Levine will make a mountain out of a mole by always raising the least trifle to cosmic principles. Finding myself baffled by the English text I thought that Adler would be the best man to solve the problem, since his forte is the technicalities of academic procedure. The third matter which I discussed with him pertains to the status of the degrees to be awarded by the Institute. If the degrees are to be recognized by the various universities it is necessary that the Institute be registered by the Regents as granting degrees of recognized value. To have them registered some official in Albany has to be seen and requested to do so. For that a letter of introduction from a man like Marshall is necessary. I wrote to Marshall more than a year and a half ago asking him for an introduction. He never acknowledged the letter. Last summer I asked him again and he promised to send me the letter. He never did. I put the matter before Adler and he promised to have the registration attended to.

Marshall





I asked Adler how matters stood with the building for the Institute. He told me that according to Stroock \$200,000 the amount given by Unterberg, is not enough to put up a building in the part of the city where I should like to see it located. Moreover the entire building program of the Seminary was at present being delayed - especially the new building for the library - on account of conversations with the Yeshibath R. Yizhak Elhanan, which he intended to discuss at the faculty meeting.

The faculty meeting which followed my interview with Adler took up during my stay two important matters. The first was the letter received from four representative students of the Senior class. In that letter they complained of the calibre of some of the students who were admitted. By making the knowledge of the Talmud the main criterion of entrance in disregard of general culture and personality a number of men have been admitted who can do the Seminary no credit. Freshman students who use some of the lecture hours in working out their algebra examples, foreigners who have no intrinsic interest in preparing themselves for the rabbinate, and others who lack personality encumber the class and if graduated will never be successful in the ministry. This petition of the self-appointed committee of four was written in the most humble and apologetic vein, so that Adler and the faculty could not take umbrage even if they wanted to. Yet nothing in particular seemed to have been the outcome except perhaps that the rule of not admitting any one who is not at least a Senior in college will henceforth be enforced. Again I harked back to the advisability of testing applicants as to their general intelligence, but Roschlander (whom Marx has nicknamed "Rash") had to ask in his nasal twang "Is not examination in the Bible a sufficient test in intelligence?" I replied "It all depends how you examine."

Senior  
Students  
complain  
about  
Freshmen



The second matter was the overtures made to Adler by the Yeshiva that some amalgamation be effected between the two institutions. Adler was seen in reference to that subject by Judge Rosalsky, Dr. Zeitlin, Sam Lampert, Fischel and Joseph H. Cohen (who though not connected with the Yeshiva urged strongly the merging of the two institutions). He was probably acting as emissary for Rosalsky). The old Rabbi Leventhal also spent a good part of Washington's birthday discussing the subject with Adler at Adler's home.

It seems that at a meeting of the directors of the Yeshiva which took place not long ago the matter was discussed very seriously as to whether an amalgamation with the Seminary was feasible. If a vote were taken right there and then the majority would have decided in favor of amalgamation. The minority that opposed the merger consisted in the main of Rabbis M. E. Margolis, Leventhal and Revel. If I am not mistaken, the old man Lampert, the father of S. C. is also supposed to have sided with them. According to M. E. Margolis, who it seems was on this occasion the most honest of them all, the Seminary represented a different tendency in Judaism. Leventhal said that the Yeshiva represented East and the Seminary West, and the twain can never meet. Revel maintained that the Yeshiva stood for an idea, whereas the Seminary was an institution. What he meant was that in the Yeshiva the study of Torah was to be pursued for its own sake and not with the end in view of using it as a profession. If now and then one did take to the rabbinate that was only an incidental result. On the other hand the Seminary encouraged only those who intended to go into the rabbinate as a profession.

All who opposed the amalgamation said that if it would be effected they would proceed to establish a new Yeshivah even if they had to begin with a room in a cellar.







It appears, however, that despite Leventhal's strenuous opposition at that meeting to any plan for merging the two institutions he went of his own accord to persuade Adler to favor such a plan. That man must be a foxy old rascal untroubled by any scruples of honesty. His son is a graduate of the Seminary. Not many years before his son was graduated the old man who then headed the Agudath Harabanim issued a "herem" against Seminary graduates being taken as rabbis by Orthodox congregations. I was the occasion of that herem. It was shortly after I had been engaged as minister at the 85 St. Congregation. Yet at the graduation exercises of his son the old Leventhal was present and delivered a ~~map~~ prayer in Hebrew in which he uttered fulsome praise of Schnechter and invoked God's protection over the Seminary.

After Adler reported to us the nature of the conversations with the Yeshiva he asked each of the members of the faculty to give his opinion. Ginzberg declared himself as opposed on the ground that there was no specific plan presented of any workable form of cooperation. He intimated rather delicately the difference in approach to the study of Jewish content, but avoided going too deeply into the question of difference in religious outlook. In addition he stressed his distrust of the rabbis who controlled the policy of the Yeshiva. Marx stated that while amalgamation was advisable in theory he would like to get more details as to how the plan would work. Moschander, on the whole welcomed cooperation. Levine spoke passionately of the campaign of slander and vilification which the Yeshiva had been carrying on all these years. He could not see, how it was possible without the Yeshiva retracting its manifold accusation to lend itself to an amalgamation with the Seminary. ~~xxx~~ I suggested that the proposal must be judged in the light of the relation of the Yeshiva to the Seminary from the time that negotiation was carried on by the Seminary to get the support of men like Lampport and his ilk. They were not satisfied with the Seminary

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Denz  
against  
amalgamation





methods and outlook and encouraged by the old Rabbis they insisted upon establishing the Yeshiva. They then conceived the ambition to enlarge the Yeshiva. In order to realize that ambition they have called in a number of laymen whose orthodoxy was not of that intense character as their own. Soon they found they had taken too large a bite. They are now in a predicament as to what to do with all that land which they had bought. These laymen who had joined the Yeshiva recently could see no reason for having two separate institutions since in their opinion both the Yeshiva and the Seminary stood for traditional Judaism, especially since the Yeshiva was getting itself more and more entangled in financial worries. They then thought of the plan of amalgamating the two institutions so as to exgricate the Yeshiva from its financial difficulties and save themselves a lot of unnecessary worries. Personally I distrusted not only the rabbis on their Board but most of the laymen as well. I, therefore, did not think it worth while to carry on those discussions any further. Finkelstein (who never sits at the faculty meeting without a cap and who is becoming daily more menacingly orthodox) was in favor of amalgamation. [His plan was that the Yeshiva should conduct both the preparatory courses and the Hatarath Horaah courses, leaving the Seminary to carry on its present work of preparing men as preachers and ministers. He felt that the Orthodox element that at present side with the Yeshiva is growing stronger and that it would be advisable for the Seminary to eliminate so powerful an opposition by amalgamating with the Yeshiva.] He cited as an instance "Young Israel" with whom he stands well, but who would under no circumstances permit Rabbi Solomon to address them.

It was difficult for me to gather Adler's attitude on this question. He seemed to be vacillating between the difficulty of having to spend the next five years in straightening out the complications that would be continually arising and the prospect of being the

Finkelstein  
in  
favor





head of a kind of Jewish University which like Columbia would swallow up a number of lesser institutions. He in fact compared bringing the Yeshiva and the Seminary under a larger corporation to Columbia College and Teachers College becoming part of Columbia University. Despite Glazberg's pointing out the only too apparent difference between the two cases, Adler went on naming the various institutions he would like to see united under that plan. He named Dropsie College, the Training School for Social Workers, a school for Cantors. I suggested "Why not include Wise's Institute of Religion?" To which he replied that for him to work with Wise was entirely out of question. He then retold the story of Wise's original intention to get the pulpit in Emanuel and when balked by Marshall, establishing his Free Synagogue. Then Wise wanted to establish a branch of the Hebrew Union College in New York. When his request was turned down, he again established a rival seminary,

Adler then continued his statement why amalgamation would be desirable. Felix M. Warburg, Rosenwald and others of their group have at different times evinced impatience at the splitting up of forces in Jewish life by having a number of rabbinical colleges. The differences among the rabbinical colleges mean nothing to those men. They would like to see something big. "For some big project they would give more generous support.

What the outcome will be I cannot judge. All I know is that those discussions make me extremely unhappy by their complete disregard of the fundamental problem as to the kind of Judaism that is to have a future in this country. When I suggested that if we are to go in for federation we not take in Wise's Institute, Heschander had the impudence to state that with the Yeshiva we had in common the Shulhan Arukh; whereas we had nothing in common with the Institute of Religion.

Adler  
has idea  
of  
university  
Wise  
Kap mentions

Kap  
mentions  
Wise



After the disconcerting experience this afternoon, I had one of the most disheartening experiences at the SAJ. I don't recall whether I have said this before. It seems that the fit name for the SAJ House as far as I am concerned is "Heartbreak House."

I sent out a personal letter last week to each of the members, begging them to come and show what they can do for the United Palestine Appeal. I wrote that I hoped that my stating frankly the object for which I called them would not deter them. This letter was sent to the entire membership body. Only fifteen showed up. I was so upset about that if I had my way I would have sent in my resignation telling them that I was wasting my time and my energy making them see the light. Before the evening was over, after a great deal of urging and pleading, about \$5000 was pledged by those present. I pledged \$150 and then raised it to \$200. The speech which I worked on for almost two hours remained undelivered. Good two hours that I might have used to read or see a movie wasted, and then that "freeze out" of an attendance. It is to weep.

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Thursday, March 11, 1926

I forgot to mention that Abe Liebovitz, to impress upon me how much he was doing for Palestine, mentioned the fact that he contributed \$1000 to a special fund that was being collected by Weitzman to carry on the "lobby work" in the different diplomatic circles. Last time Weitzman was here he took with him \$75,000 for that purpose. The donors are furnished an account of the way the money is spent.

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This morning Rabbi Birnbaum of Youngstown came to see me. He described to me conditions in his congregation as far from bright. The most influential workers have either died or moved away. The remainder of his community have not the energy to raise the money necessary





to cover the budget which is about \$27,000. He could remain there provided he would consent to take \$5000 instead of his present salary of \$7500. It is not so much his unwillingness to make the sacrifice, he claims that deters him from continuing at a reduced salary, as the fact that his prestige would suffer. They would believe him anxious to hang on to the position at any cost. He explained that most of the Jews in his congregation are Hungarians who lack the initiative and energy of the Russian Jews who have an orthodox congregation with a graduate of the Yeshiva at the head, a young fellow of 21 whom they pay as much as \$5000 the first year and \$6000 the year following.

March 11, 1926

This afternoon I called on Sokolow. His daughter was present and later Van Vriesland turned up. Van Vriesland alluded to the fact that the educational work in Palestine was still without a head, and asked me whether I was at all desirous of coming to Palestine to take charge of the schools under the auspices of the Zionist Organization.

The conversation was entirely in Hebrew. Sokolow showed himself very friendly and even deferential to a degree that embarrassed me, as when he insisted upon helping me with my coat.

Toward the end of the session tonight S. C. Lamport dropped into the SAJ. When the session was over he showed me a letter in which some economic undertaking in Palestine sponsored by Marshall, Lehman, Flexner, Untermeyer et al was referred to. I expressed my scorn for these men on account of their failure to share the burden of the responsibility for building up Palestine. I said that and that he ought not throw in his lot with them.

I then took him to task for not consulting me before urging upon Adler the amalgamation of the Yeshivah with the Seminary. After considerable fencing he made the statement to me on his word of honor

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Educat.



*Marshall behind merger*

and confidentially that Marshall sent for him three times to get him to bring the two institutions together. While it is true that he and Levy of the Yeshiva Board were anxious for the merger, the initial move was made entirely by Marshall. This fact, if it is true, only makes a liar either out of Marshall or Adler or both, for Adler impressed solemnly upon us yesterday that Marshall refrained from giving the impression that he was anxious for the amalgamation and that whatever overtures were to be made they had to come entirely from the Yeshiva. I am more confirmed now than ever in my belief that Adler is really anxious to do what he calls the "big thing," and go down in history as having established a great Jewish University. Then again narrowminded and visionless as he is in his understanding of Judaism, of religion and the forces of social life in general, why should he not conceive such an ambition? On the other hand old man Lampport who is playing a double game in this situation like Leventhal, S. C. Lampport, Levy, Fischel have a white elephant on their hands of which they want to be rid.

\* \* \* \*

Tuesday, March 16, 1926

*Depressed*

My Jewish consciousness acts like an exposed nerve of a tooth. It gives me no rest. It often throws me into a fit of blues. Instead of making me experience the reality of God my Jewish consciousness often leads me to despair of mankind in general and of the Jews in particular. These last few days have again been days of torment and ordeal. Of course these spells of pessimism are brought on by some incident which makes evident the futility of my efforts.

Last Saturday morning I was prepared to give the eighth lecture of the series on the Program of the SAJ. This lecture was to have dealt with the problem of leisure and to point out that the proper use of leisure must now constitute the basis of Jewish organized

Kap's depression so  
often tied to the number  
of people who attend  
services.



life. The attendance, however, was so poor-about 110 persons in all, including about 70 non-members - that I did not deliver the lecture. I managed to control my anger in the explanation that I gave for not delivering the lecture, but my rather slighting reference to non-members as "transients" was certainly not in good taste.

In my walk with Lena after the services there ensued the usual talk. I blamed her for not encouraging me in my attempts to break away from this carcass to which I have tied myself. She properly rejoined that she had advised me emphatically against entangling myself in organization work when it was evident that I could no longer remain in the Center. A second opportunity presented itself about a year and a half ago when the lease at 41 W. 86 St. was about to expire. I saw at that time that my efforts yielded little result. Why then did I proceed with plans for buying a site and renovating the buildings in which we have our present quarters. Logically she was right. I was stumped for the moment. But the fact is that the very desire of the SAJ to go into buying ground and even putting up a building was to me an indication that they were interested in the aims for which the SAJ stood. Why then do they act so apathetically now?

Later in the day I happened to come across the following parable in Luke XIII, which, had I known it when I spoke with Lena, might have served as a true reply: A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; he came in search of fruit on it but he found none. So he said to the vine dresser etc.

Last night at the meeting of the SAJ Board of Trustees which had a better attendance than usual because the Chairman had at my suggestion sent out an urgent call, I voiced my dissatisfaction with the spirit shown by the members toward the Sabbath services. That growing indifference which one could plainly see on Sabbath mornings was symptomatic of the deterioration in the general morale of the Society. At

Imbroglio  
about  
S.D.S.



First there was a tendency to meet the evil by appointing a committee to get after the members who have grown delinquent in their attendance at services. Later, however, the discussion led to the wiser plan of working out a survey of the membership body whereby we would have some idea of what the members expect from the organization, and what should be done to hold their interest.

In the informal conversation that I had with <sup>4</sup> three or four of the members of the Board after the meeting, they suggested to me that I would get a better attendance if I were to speak on current plays and books, instead of on the portion of the week or on the aims of the Society. These last remarks opened up my wounds afresh. I cannot help realizing that such a request sounds the death knell of Judaism in this country. For to me the difference between Judaism and any other civilization is not a difference in abstract principles, but primarily a difference in the sources whence such principles are to be derived. If the history and experiences of the Jewish people are to be supplanted by non-Jewish books and plays as the source of principles of living there is an end to Judaism.

mean to draw on Jewish sources

Probably the fact is that living in America we must draw upon the materials of American life at least as much as upon those of Jewish life for inspiration to live ethically and spiritually. But the danger is that the materials of American life by the very nature of their wealth and immediate interest are bound to crowd out the materials of Jewish experience altogether. With what will we then be left?

Dr. Tchernowitz (p 124) called on me last Saturday night. We spent about three hours discussing the question as to the next step in Judaism. I naturally find him congenial because he takes the same attitude toward Judaism as I do, so that I do not have to go over the same ground with him as I have to with those who are either too





orthodox or too radical to see any need for reconstructing Judaism. He frankly denies (to me at least) any belief in p. 134 and follows me a long way in my theory that the ritual practices cannot be continued in the legalistic spirit in which they have been observed hitherto. I believe that they must be converted into folkways, and very much developed and enriched both in content and in symbolic significance.

I am sorry for Tschernowitz personally. He is in Wise's JIR where the atmosphere is entirely too unJewish for him to feel at home. In addition Dr. Obermann is unfriendly toward him. Obermann, I was told, hates the Talmud and would like to remove it from the curriculum. (This is on the authority of Dr. Kohut.)

Tschern  
unhappy at  
JIR

Yesterday morning I concluded my course at the Training School for Jewish Social Workers. That course which lasted about 75 hours gave me deeper satisfaction than any that I have given in years. The little additional income which it brought in (\$1300) proved a great help in the house.

Sunday night Neumann who is the Director of the United Palestine Appeal, the one whom I would designate as the p. 135 of this country, came to see me with reference to a plan he had in mind of launching a Hebrew cultural movement. I told him that both for the sake of the success of the movement and for the prestige of Zionism the movement ought to be launched by the Zionist Organization. It is about time that Zionism should begin showing results in the life of American Jewry.

Last week I read through the greater part of Klausner's book on Jesus. It occurred to me that anyone who would write a play with that interpretation of Jesus would score a great success. My heart

\*  
Kaplan  
Jews



bled for poor Jesus, who took it into his head that he was the Messiah, and my soul rose in revolt at the aberration under which more than a third of humanity has been laboring for the last nineteen centuries. The worst of it is that if Jesus had not talked himself into being a Messiah, he would actually have deserved to take his place alongside of Amos and Isaian, and he might perhaps have made a beginning toward undoing that terrible mistake in Judaism, the mistake of making ritual practice as of coordinate spiritual value with ethical law.

\* \* \* \* \*

Monday, March 22, 1926

Last Wednesday Dr. Cecil Roth called. He is a young scholar from England who is specializing in medieval Jewish history, particularly Italian. He probably learned about me from George Hyman who must have told him of my efforts to interpret Judaism as a civilization. Not long ago at one of the Menorah journal dinners Roth happened to make the statement that Judaism wasn't a religion but a civilization. It was that fact probably which led George Hyman to call his attention to my endeavors.

I tried to draw out from Roth what in the course of his studies of Jewish medieval history did he find in the Judaism of the Middle Ages that might help us in meeting the problem of Judaism at the present time. He was unable to point to any specific method or principle or ~~was~~ world outlook of that time as still valid for us. The mere fact that Judaism functioned then as a civilization was to him all sufficient. I contended that if the Jewish Middle Ages are to live in the soul of the Jew they ought to yield some fundamental value or values analogous to those of the prophetic age. Dubnow tries to elicit a value of that kind when he proposes martyrdom for a civilization as the outstanding trait of the Middle Ages. (cf. his philosophy

Roth  
views  
Judaism  
as a  
civilization





Dec 22, 1926

-80-

of Jewish History). To me there is nothing distinctively Jewish in martyrdom, nor anything helpful as far as our present day problem is concerned.

I also suggested to him to find out to what extent other-worldliness characterized the outlook of the average Jewish layman of the Middle Ages. He had never thought of otherworldliness as the all dominant motif of medieval Judaism.

On the whole I enjoyed the two hours or so of conversation with him. Like so many other visitors the large number of Jews one sees here and the hubub of Jewish organized give him the illusion of an active of promising Jewish life. Would that it were so. I know otherwise.

On Thursday I had a distinguished visitor in Dr. Klatzkin, one of the foremost thinkers if not the foremost thinker among our Hebraists. He did not come however to discuss with me philosophy, but to interest me in his German Hebrew Encyclopedia "Eshkol" for which he came to this country to collect money. We did touch upon other matters than those of a financial character, but we pursued no one idea very far. As he was leaving he made a remark which proved to me that he too is a victim of that tragic sense of futility which gnaws at the heart of all of us who try to resuscitate Judaism. "I can't understand," he said, "what it is that drives me on to engage in this work. The Rabbis say that every blade of grass has its angel which keeps on driving it and saying to it 'Grow, grow'. So there must be some Jewish angel or spirit which keeps on driving us and compelling us to work for the Jewish people. Otherwise I can't see why I am doing all this." There is a man who has no reason to be unhappy. He has written volumes. He has achieved fame. But the feeling that he is writing in water is something that not even he can escape.

Klatzkin  
know why  
he works so  
hard for  
Jewish  
people.



Sunday afternoon Hayyim Nahman Bialik was the guest of the Teachers Institute. In addition to the students we had invited also the graduates and some of the Israel Friedlaender Classes. The exercises were very simple. A few songs by the students, a few introductory remarks by me and then his talk which lasted only about twenty to twenty five minutes. The usual struggle I go through whenever I have to speak in Hebrew cost me a lot of nervous energy. I wrote out what I had to say. But I dared not depend upon my memory which plays me all sorts of tricks at the most inopportune time. For fear that I might forget what to say or betray signs of having memorized, I read. That, no doubt, must have sported the effect of my remarks. It surely made me feel blue for the rest of the day. I am not over it yet.

After the meeting the entire staff of the Institute went with Bialik to a restaurant on Second Avenue. As soon as the waiter was told that we had Bialik with us we were treated as preferential diners. The only one that had a regular meal was Bialik. The rest of us had tea and cake. He occupied the center of the stage for two hours. His talk like the one I had with him in Tel Aviv turned upon Hebrew linguistics. That seems to be his hobby. Not being expert in modern Hebrew literature I had very little to contribute. Having to play the role of listener in discussions of that kind does not add to my good humor.

Mine is the hell of being a mediocrity and knowing it. \*

Last night the third of the SAJ discussion meetings of this year took place. The subject for discussion was compulsory military training in the colleges. Much to my surprise it was argued pro and con rather ably by the four people who participated in the debate. I had not intended to say anything because I was spiritually weary and





defeated. But here was an opportunity for me to test out the SAJ whether there was at least a modicum of seriousness on the part of any of its members toward our platform. We say we are dedicated to the cause of peace. Would the members refuse to go on record as opposed to compulsory military training in the colleges? Here was an opportunity for me to convince myself that I have unquestioned reason for being despondent about expecting any constructive results for Judaism from so apathetic a group. To my surprise those present did actually pick up enough courage to vote unanimously against compulsory military training and to ask the Board to endorse the work of the Committee organized in this city to defeat the purpose of the militants. Where I, after so many crushing defeats, found the heart to get up and plead with them that they should take themselves seriously and emulate the example of the Quakers in doing something concrete to prove that the Society was dedicated to the cause of peace, is more than I know. I am reminded of what Klatzkin said to me the other day. There must be some unseen spirit pushing me, driving me, to work as though there were to be a future for Judaism. I was not even put out of countenance by the fact that out of the twenty or more new members who were especially invited for the installation which was to take place last night, only four showed up.

My revived spirits have drooped again as a result of a conversation I had this evening with Charles Cohen, one of our members. We met for the purpose of discussing what questions should be included in the survey. I have become so used to my suggestions calling forth resistance that I am as meek as a lamb, and listen patiently to the most unreasonable objections that are brought up against whatever measures I propose. Whether a change has come over Charles Cohen or over me, he certainly does not irritate me one tenth of the way he would get on my nerves formerly. There is no question that he has a



good mind. If he only hadn't used it in the Lamport fashion for sophisticated ends.

It has become clearer to me than ever that I am a veritable Don Quixote. Beguiled by the delusion that I can help to render Judaism permanent, or even temporarily safe, I fight against windmills which always worst me. That is why I am the Knight of the long face, always grumpy, always in bad humor.

The calculation is as simple as an example in subtraction. Any Jew that is worth his salt is engaged either in Palestine Work, Federation, Joint, CJI, Jewish Center of the East Side, Home of Daughters of Jacob, Jewish Education Association and a thousand other organizations. People have to go to a show once in a while too. Business is strenuous. Why should they be expected to take an interest in the SAJ and its purposes? On the other hand, if Jews keep out of all these activities have they a right to call themselves Jews? Do I myself know whether the campaigns, drives and national organizations are upbuilding or destroying Judaism?

*Ambivalent*

The vortex into which I have been drawn in is whirling me about with accelerating speed. I am dizzy. I pray to God to give me strength to tear myself away from this whirlpool to where the river of life runs smooth and straight. The worst of it is that I am at a loss how to bring up my children. The more Jewishness I inculcate in them the more I am drawing them too into this fatal vortex. Today I purposely put into Judith's hands the lengthy debate carried on in the English pages of the Yiddish Vorwarts concerning the Jewish prospect in Palestine. I am afraid that she too is mesmerized by the romance and tragedy of the Jewish struggle. I want her to think for herself. I thought that the arguments against Zionism would shake her in her faith in Palestine. Instead she seemed as ardent in her faith as before. Of course it is too soon to judge.







What a pleasant state of mind to be in on the eve of our festival of Redemption! I have to preach on the Redemption. What can I say; what shall I say, with all these doubts torturing me?

\* \* \* \*

Thursday, March 25, 1926

Today I went to Albany to find out the status of the degrees that the Seminary has been authorized by the State Legislature to grant the graduates of the Teachers Institute. To my chagrin I learned from Dr. Downing, Assistant Commissioner of Education, that they were practically worthless.

\* \* \* \*

Thursday, May 20, 1926

During the last few weeks I had my usual ups and downs, though by far more downs than ups. I haven't the patience to describe in detail the few items worth recording; I shall, therefore, merely make mention of them so as not to break the continuity of the diary.

On Sat., April 17 I had Amertenko (?) speak from the SAJ Pulpit. He pleaded for a return to Jewish life and ideals. His argument was based upon pluralism as the only logical form for Americanism. The melting pot theory, he contended, was a failure because the old-stock Americans have persistently refused to be thrown into the pot to become assimilated with the later arrivals.

That same morning I urged the people to take a more serious interest in those phases of Judaism which still exercise a hold on them. On that Sabbath the portion of the Law was Deuteronomy 32. I used that fact as an illustration of their failure to display that vital interest which would lead them to demand changes in the form of services and in the nature of our weekly readings.

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In the afternoon of that same Sabbath I went to see Drs. Altschick and Goldman who are here in the interest of their proposed Hebrew-Yiddish encyclopedia. Although I tried to discuss matters of an intellectual character, I saw that their main purpose in asking me to come was to learn from me to what extent they might count upon me for financial support. I made clear to them that I have absolutely no one whom I could ask for money.

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On Wed., April 21 I attended a home dinner which H. Liebovitz gave to a number of SAJ members for the purpose of discussing the financial situation. There were about twenty-five present. Abe Liebovitz, the treasurer, reported that we expect to have a budget of about \$49,000 for next year. Of that amount about \$14,000 will go toward paying interest on mortgage and notes. The income amounts to about \$28,000. The question was how to meet the deficit. After considerable discussion they adopted J. Levy's suggestion that the members be charged for seats for the holidays, from \$25 to \$75. They thought that that method would work much better than that of direct assessment. Those who were there pledged to contribute about \$3000.

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On Thurs., April 22 I was in Wilkesbarre where I addressed the gathering of the study groups in Rabbi Levitzky's congregation in the hope of establishing there an SAJ chapter. He promised to have such a chapter formed right after the summer, upon the resumption of activities.

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On Friday, April 23 I delivered a lecture in Judaism as a civilization at Rabbi Stern's Temple on 82 St.

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On Wed., May 5 I delivered a lecture on "The Jewish Contribution to Patriotism" under the auspices of the Women's League of the United Synagogue at the SAJ House.

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On Thurs., May 6 a few parents of the children at the SAJ school answered the invitation to discuss the school situation. As usual at those affairs, I went away with a heartache.

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On Wed., May 12 I met the class of the School for Jewish Social Workers for the purpose of correcting the impression I had left with them in my concluding lecture. In that lecture I stated that the disappearance of Judaism in America was a matter of about four or five generations. Upon reflection I realized that I had no right to make such a statement since Judaism was bound to continue in this country so long as Christianity prevailed as the source of spiritual values, for the bulk of the American people. Moreover, Judaism cannot afford to disappear so long as there is no American religion, and it will take at least five centuries before such a religion will evolve, since as a result of our sophistication no spiritual values can be accepted unless they have back of them a history of long standing. This conviction which I expressed a long time ago in one of the Menorah articles would frequently slip me, because I would permit my abstract reasoning to run away with me, and forget the realities in the situation. The return of the conviction during the last month or so has helped to calm me down a good deal. Yet I could not rest until I saw to it that the class be asked to meet me and I had a chance to tell them of the old conviction that had returned to me.

I realize that it is not pure logic that has made me change my mind. But I am convinced that there is as much rationality in the



intense wish to continue Judaism as there is in any geometrical system of reasoning. Reasoning in this case is merely a tool which life, the life of a people, employs to attain its end - self-preservation. (E)

*Wants out  
J.S. P. 5*

On Sunday May 16 the SAJ had its annual meeting. It was conducted on so low and petty a plane that next day I went to see Harry Liebovitz to tell him that I should like to find a way for discontinuing my work with the Society.

May 1926

Yesterday, Wed., May 19 I took as my subject for the Shabbath sermon the subject "Can the Torah Become a Power." The greaterpart of it was devoted to the topic of Jewish education. [I stomped and raged and thumped the pulpit with such vigor that my hand hurt me all day.] It seemed to have made an impression. Yet Harry Liebovitz who spoke to me after the services said "I tell you frankly that you nullify the effect of what you say every time you blow up. " This is a sample of Liebovitz's lingo whenever he lets go. With regard to my giving up the SAJ he advanced the usual arguments about playing into the hands of the "I told you so's" and being unjust to those people who put money into the building.

*Ginzberg*

An indication of Ginzberg's attitude toward me -- On Sat., April 24 ( ) I preached on Religion vs. Superstition. David Goldstein, a third year student who comes frequently to the SAJ services, heard the sermon. When he went to see Ginzberg that same afternoon, Ginzberg asked him where/<sup>he</sup> had attended services as he does most of the students when they come to him. Goldstein told him that he had attended the SAJ services and heard me preach on Religion vs. Superstition. Ginzberg no sooner heard these words from him than he flew into a rage and delivered himself of a diatribe against drawing any

(9)





distinctions between religion and superstition. The people had too little religion as it was and such talks were bound to deprive them of the little that they had. For half an hour he kept on raving and literally fuming at the mouth. Rabbi Kadushin was also present. It was Kadushin who first reported this outbreak to me though he did not mention the violent form that it took. He did remark, however, that Ginzberg was certainly no friend of mine. Not long after I chanced upon Goldstein and got from him more of what actually happened. Mrs. Ginzberg, rather embarrassed by her husband's conduct, and with a woman's intuition of pretending that the report of it might reach me tried to explain to them that Ginzberg hadn't slept that week for several nights and that his nerves were on edge. This is not the first time that the mention of my name to him was like waving a red flag in front of a bull.

\* \* \* \*

Sunday, May 23, 1926

The Zionist Organization debut in educational and cultural work was greeted with a howl of protest on the part of the Agudath Horabonim, on the ground that the ZO would secularize the Talmud Torahs. The United Synagogue not having much to show as its achievement during last year tried to put a kick into its convention, held toward the end of April at Baltimore, by also raising the cry of secularism. They too passed a resolution protesting against the Zionist Organization's move to interest itself in Jewish education. A number of Rabbis of the Rabbinical Assembly were called together by Sam Cohen to put that resolution into effect. Somehow the matter got out of hand, due to Jacob Kohn's desire to "get even" with the United Synagogue or to his yearning to get into the Zionist bandwagon. This time - for the first time in years, I too was drawn into the discussion. Drob appointed me chairman for the purpose of drawing up the



resolution of the Rabbinical Assembly and presenting it to Lipsky. In that resolution I embodied the opinion I had expressed originally to Newman that the ZO ought not to interfere with the financing, administration or educational ~~xxxx~~ policies of the Talmud Torah, but devote itself mainly to promoting an interest in Hebrew, support periodical literature and foster a knowledge of Palestine. The ZO formed a separate organization at a conference held on Sunday, May 16. I made no attempt to be present. I see no point to these large meetings, where no issue can be discussed calmly or thoroughly, and where you have to use mob psychology to get anything across. Jacob Kohn was elected one of the vice-presidents.

\* \* \* \*

Friday, May 28, 1926

When I saw Dr. Benderly in Cleveland he told me that the entire attempt of the Zionists to take hold of Jewish education in this country ended in a fiasco. From someone else I learned that Dr. Benderly as chairman of the finance committee asked how much money he could look forward to from the ZOA. When he was told that he would be granted about \$25,000 he practically refused to have anything further to do with the newly born "American Association" etc.

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The following are some of the activities which I participated in as functionary in the SAJ.

A dinner and theatre party of the Bnei and Bnoth Mizvah. There were 22 in all, 12 girls and 10 boys. I learned later that when one of the girls was asked whether she had signed the pledge, she answered that she did it because she could not refuse me.

On the first day of Shabuoth, graduation exercises. The graduation of five boys and two girls which has been held over since last year. Of the graduates, some were ashamed to show themselves. Nadassah, who was one of them, recited part of Isaiah XI; another





girl read from a piece of paper a poem by Emma Lazarus. Klein distributed the prizes and made silly remarks. The few children who could be coaxed into marching into the synagogue squeaked a little Hebrew song.

The sermon which I delivered that day betrayed my anger and disgust. This led Harry Liebovitz, whom I had seen a few days before about giving up the SAJ, to make his remark about my nullifying my work (see p. 144).

The Friday after Shabuoth I attended the luncheon given by the Women's division to celebrate the conclusion of their activities. I talked without gusto.

#### Types of members we are getting into the SAJ:

1. At the annual meeting: - Israel: "If I had known that I would have to pay once cent more than \$75 a year I would not have joined." Golden, after leaving the services inaugurating the Sabbath and waiting for change after he had bought a paper at the stand, "Why did you cut out <sup>17.82N</sup> ~~17.82N~~ from the service?"

A Gentile nurse, Pauline Ziegler of Englewood Hospital, who is engaged to a Jewish physician, has studied carefully the few books I gave her for the purpose of becoming acquainted with the outline of Jewish history and the tenets and practices of Judaism (as taught in Greenstone's book.)

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Tuesday, June 8, 1926

The conference at Cleveland called by those holding important executive positions in Jewish educational work took place on Wednesday and Thursday, May 26 and 27. Chipkin read an excellent paper on the concrete facts about salaries, vacations, and similar details



of the teaching profession. Friedland of the Cleveland Hebrew Schools spoke on the experiments he had been making in Hebrew achievement tests. I enjoyed the specific nature of his facts and suggestions. It seems, however, that the other members of the conference of whom there were about 25, preferred the discussion by Benderly and myself of some of the fundamentals of Jewish education. Benderly read a paper Wednesday afternoon on a scheme whereby some of the effort that goes now into teaching Hebrew without producing results, should be directed to extension work. His suggestion in the main was that instead of having all children take Hebrew from their seventh year up, Hebrew should be taught to a select group from the ages of eleven and up. My paper which was supposed to be a discussion of his, instead of finding fault with the specific suggestion made by Benderly, took up the broader question of the need of viewing Jewish education in a more comprehensive manner than his paper seemed to imply. In the discussion which followed, Benderly's presentation seemed to be demolished. Not one of those who spoke seemed to have a good word to say of his suggestion. The discussion was protracted far into the night. Benderly and I gave the concluding talks. He came off with flags flying. My remarks were applauded to the echo.

The Brickners invited Benderly and myself to their home for overnight. We stayed up till 2:30.

Next day about 150 men and women representing ~~xxx~~ the four large congregations of Cleveland gave a luncheon to the members of the conference. Rabbi A. H. Silver presided. I and Benderly spoke. We both made a hit.

~~xxx~~ Seldom did I enjoy a conference as much as I did the one at Cleveland.

\* \* \* \*





Monday  
July 5, 1926

On Monday, June 7 at 2:30 Rabbi Levine, Honor, Chipkin and I took up the discussion of the problem what to do about imbuing the students of the Teachers Institute with a belief in the ~~xx~~ value of Jewish observances and with a spirit of piety that should find expression in worship. The only course which at present concerns itself with the problem of religion is the one I give. [It consists of one period a week during the Junior year, and two periods during the Senior. In that limited time I cannot accomplish more than give an introduction to the Bible from the modern point of view and the pragmatic interpretation of Genesis and Exodus.] The consequence of the Institute neglecting to give an adequate course in religion is that most of the graduates carry away a sympathetic attitude toward the religious element in Judaism, but are entirely puzzled as to what line of practice to follow. As a matter of fact, they become somewhat cynical as to the need of worship and ceremonies and live up partly to what is expected of them by the authorities of the religious schools where they hold positions. The conformity being only outward and for the purpose of keeping their positions it is not maintained as soon as they can escape the observation of the children and the authorities of the school. Incidents of teachers dropping change in the classroom while teaching the need of observing the Sabbath by not engaging in any transactions, or caught working in the libraries on Sabbaths, are of frequent occurrence.

In order to prevent the discussion from going off on a tangent, I tried to keep it down to the clarification of two points. First the determination of what might be termed the negative element in our attitude toward Judaism. Before proceeding with the question as to what beliefs and observances we could agree on as necessary to be transmitted to the students we had to be sure that we were all of one mind

Kap's  
concerns  
T.I.



concerning the general point of view from which we are to evaluate the Jewish past. I asked the men whether they were all agreed that we should regard the beliefs and practices as having evolved naturally and not in the manner described by tradition. They all answered in the affirmative. We were also of one mind as to the importance of stressing the national element in Judaism. As to the second and more specific element in our program, truth to tell, my mind is not clear just now. I cannot lay my hands on the piece of paper upon which I made note of the result of our deliberations. I recall, however, that we did agree as to the need of Sabbath observance in the sense at least of abstaining from routine work, of the dietary laws, and of worship.

Perhaps the more important conclusion reached in our discussion was the one to the effect that the teaching of religion must be extended so as to cover the entire four year curriculum. It is with that end in view that I have engaged Milton Steinberg, a seminary student of two years' standing, who I believe will be successful in helping ~~me~~ to carry the students over from the naive and blooming confusion about Judaism which they acquire at their elementary religious schools to a rational and sympathetic approach to all questions pertaining to Jewish creed and deed. Steinberg's main task will be to give the courses in history formerly given by Kadushin who has accepted a pulpit in Chicago, but I look forward also to his giving the freshmen two hours a week in religion. So far I have not planned the course in detail. But I shall probably have him give the students an idea of historic development using the socratic method. I am also planning to have Chertoff teach the students the details of observances and ritual during the sophomore year. I should then take up with them the same work that I am doing now, but no doubt they would get a great deal more out of what I am giving them ~~by~~ than they do now.

Steinberg  
to teach  
Rel. at  
the  
Seminary  
T.D.





It will probably be necessary to plan some form of religious endeavor in which the students would have to engage of their own accord in order that their self-activity be called into play, for without such self-activity instruction in religion is likely to prove even more sterile than instruction in any other subject.

\* \* \* \*

Tuesday, July 6, 1926

The annual convention of the Rabbinic Assembly took place this year at Long Branch at the Scarborough Hotel beginning last Wednesday, June 30 and continuing till Friday afternoon. I believe I missed the last three conventions of the Assembly. With the Assembly controlled by such reactionaries as Epstein and Drob these conventions were utilized by Ginzberg and Adler to repress by sarcasm and ridicule all attempts to get away from the beaten path of non-committal Judaism. This year I had no excuse to give for staying away. I was not in Palestine as I was last year, nor did I have tonsillitis, as I did a year or two ago. Besides, I did not want it to become an established tradition that I kept aloof from the councils of the Seminary graduates. If the idea that I was a sorehead should come to prevail I would be playing into Ginzberg's hands. In fact, unfriendly as I know Ginzberg to be toward me, I am trying to draw the teeth of his hostility by seeking to conciliate him. Despite the diatribe that he delivered against me in the hearing of R. Kadushin and the student <sup>David</sup> Goldstein I visited him during the week before I knew I would have to meet him at Long Branch. In fact I went so far ~~as~~ as to tell him that I would deem it a favor if he would help me with the work I am doing on the Rabbinic conception of God. Of course he was glad to be treated as master, and promised to guide me in the work.

I can well understand why Ginzberg should feel hostile toward me. He cannot help realizing that if not for me he would have had the



undivided allegiance of the graduates. If not for my encouraging the majority of them to insurgency against the policy of evasion he would have had his way with them in intimidating them into a slavish fear of rabbinic law, and here comes along Kaplan who hasn't any pretensions even to Jewish scholarship and tries to overthrow his authority and influence. Yet I can't see how I can act otherwise. My heart bleeds as I think of the tremendous opportunity that Ginzberg has had to put new life into Judaism, an opportunity that he abandoned simply out of some underlying selfishness or perversity which I have never been able to fathom. With the vast fund of Jewish and general learning at his command he could afford to be intellectually honest. Instead he uses his very cleverness to befuddle the minds of the students and to foster in them a cynicism and intellectual dishonesty.

On my way to Long Branch I found myself in the same seat with R. Benjamin Cohen who is assistant librarian to Marx. I tried in vain to persuade Cohen that the policy of evasion in Jewish belief and practice was doing Judaism a world of harm. But he seems to have fallen a victim to the Marx-Ginzberg influence. The dust of the books that he continually handles is beginning to settle on his soul. I realized that it was futile for me to get him as an ally. He told me however a bit of interesting information about Schechter which I am going to note down. Marx had told him that when Schechter came to this country and assumed the presidency of the Seminary he was about to draw up a platform which would set forth his conception of Conservative Judaism. In that platform he intended to state clearly wherein he differed from those who professed either Orthodoxy or Reform. But he was strongly advised by Adler and the late Judge Sulzberger against coming out with such statements, on the ground that he would be sure to alienate the Orthodox Jews.

Schechter





As usual instead of beginning at the time scheduled - 10:30 in the morning, the Convention opened after lunch about two in the afternoon. Gingsberg was introduced as the first speaker to deliver an address of greeting. He spoke from 2:15 to 3:35. I can't help saying that he gets on my nerves, with his patronizing air, satirical side thrusts and medley of sophistries with which he dazzles the half awake minds of the majority of his listeners. There is no illuminating truth, there is no flash of genuine wit, there is no spiritual passion or fiery indignation in anything that he utters. Thinly covered pretense of humility, affected non-chalance to give the impression of indifference to what you think about him, caustic ridicule and occasionally a splutter like that of wetted fire crackers in the process of exploding. These are the varying moods of his talks. Every-time he delivers one of these addresses I have the feeling that I heard him say these things and tell those stories time without number. Every other sentence is sure to have in it the word historical. He usually starts out with a long introduction about his having run for the train and having stopped on the way to join a crowd that had gathered because of an automobile accident and the policeman saying Damn it, if the man who drove the car had not gone to the right or to the left, but had kept straight ahead of him the accident wouldn't have happened. (I swear that I heard him tell this story once before as having happened to him.)

Then comes, of course, the rabbinic passage about avoiding the path of fire and the path of ice, etc. Then a jab at Adler by claiming to see no reason why he should be asked to greet the assembly since he is neither president nor dean. This is followed by some loosely relevant story or two, then the remark that he taught every subject at the Seminary (which means that he should have continued teaching theology) except Homiletics, and we all know why (half joke



and half jab at me.) This is followed by the statement that he was not prepared to speak, but having noticed in the train that some of the men who were going to the convention took out big manuscripts which they had prepared he thought he too ought to jot down some notes. Accordingly he has to refer to the notes which he hopes he will be able to read -- at this point he drops out from his coat pocket large yellow foolscap sheets which he holds with an air of indifference. This performance lasts for half an hour.

Then began the talk proper. It dealt with a few principles or rather generalizations concerning the need of judging the worth or truth of tendencies and institutions in the light of the circumstances out of which they arise. It is evident that this method of reasoning lends itself easily to one's purpose to condemn whatever one is prejudiced against, or praise whatever one is in favor of, especially the former. I cannot imagine Ginzberg praising anything. He vented his spleen against the objects of his hatred by subsuming each such object under some generalization to which he gave the air of a newly discovered truth. He did not fail to find some historical principle to put me in the wrong; and he also found another such principle to express his opposition to Adler's plan to combine the Seminary work with the Yeshiva. In the main he contended that rationalism was good in the days of Saadia, and mysticism in the thirteenth century and nationalism in the prophetic period; the only implication that one could draw from his address was that at the present time rationalism and mysticism and nationalism are out of place. What is in place he left me and others like me guessing.

\* \* \*

Wednesday, July 7, 1926

After Ginzberg's address Levitsky and Arzt read papers on the methods of organizing and holding adult study groups. The dis-





discussion of those papers was then thrown open to the floor. I happened to go out for a short while to answer a telephone. When I came back Epstein, who was in the chair, called upon me to express my opinion of the matter before the convention. I am at my worst when taken un-awares. I proved it by making a stupid remark about my not having been asked in time to be able to formulate any ideas on the subject. At this point Drob snapped back that I had been asked through Kadushin to read a paper on any subject I chose but that I had refused. The discussion proceeded. Jacob Kohn could not go on, it seems, with what he had to say without referring to the fact that although he had not been prepared to speak on the subject he had some suggestions to make. Seeing that I had to extricate myself from the thunder that I had made I asked the privilege of the floor to explain that I had misunderstood the purport of the discussion. My impression was not that each one was to give an account of his own experiences, but to express what general ideas he had on the subject of adult education. I felt that more important by far than the question of technique is that of the content of study. Lacking as we do such content due to our tendency to be satisfied with the archaeological viewpoint and to our failure to relate Judaism of the past to life of the present all efforts at perfecting our technique are mere gestures in the void.

It is evident that subconsciously or semi-consciously I was trying to get even with Ginzberg who seems to have become an obsession with me as I have with him.

The session concluded with a carefully prepared paper by Tshernowitz in Hebrew. He had asked through Kadushin to be allowed to present the paper. In semi-popular style he repeated the old argument against the orthodox contention that Jewish law has never changed, and in journalistic style he described the philosophy of Reform and the non-committal attitude of Conservative Judaism. This led up to his



plea that the Rabbinic Assembly elect an authoritative body that should take up in detail the moot questions of Jewish law and enact various ordinances to meet the exigencies of the times. There was no discussion of his paper because the hour was too late, but principally I suppose because the subject was too ticklish and the views too divergent to permit the discussion to prove fruitful. Although Tchernowitz was promised that his paper would be discussed in one of the subsequent sessions, the promise was not kept.

For the evening of that Wednesday I had arranged to meet a number of men with whom I wanted to talk over a plan that I had in mind of organizing a Rabbinic Council of the SAJ. The following men showed up: Kadushin, Sol Goldman of Cleveland, Israel M. Goldman of Providence, H<sub>o</sub>ffman of Utical, Josh Kohn and Si Greenberg of Philadelphia, Landesman of Brownsville, Aaronson of Minneapolis, Jesse Schwartz of Toronto, L. S. Liebreich of Stamford, Hadas of Columbia. The men came to my brother-in-law Ed's cottage where I was stopping during the first part of my stay in Long Branch.

\* \* \*

Thursday, July 8, 1926

Instead of springing that plan upon them immediately I first presented an alternative proposition, the one, in fact I had originally thought of suggesting to the men. The latter proposition was along the lines presented by Tchernowitz in the paper which he had read in the afternoon. It differed from Tchernowitz's in omitting the grandiose undertaking of organizing a Beth Din Ha-gadol; but the notion of giving to conservative Judaism a specific differentia that would distinguish it both from orthodoxy and reform was prominent in my alternate plan as well as his. My own mind however had been made up that such a plan was not feasible and I therefore did not advocate it as fervently as I did the one which included the formation of a Rabbinic





Council of the SAJ. The main advantages of the latter plan are 1) the group of rabbis would not be committing itself merely to some purely changes in the ritual or in ceremonial practice but would initiate a movement to reinstate Torah as the primary expression of Jewish life. 2) They would be building up a laity that could carry their decisions and suggestions into practice and that would act as a leaven to the rest of the Jewish community. 3) They would have the opportunity to publish their views in a periodical which the SAJ would make it possible for them to publish.

It took me some time to convince those present of the importance of taking action in behalf of a positive and modern Judaism. After a three hour's discussion they adopted the plan of forming themselves into a Rabbinic Council. At Sol Goldman's suggestion it was decided not to admit men just graduated. That kept out both Max Goldman and Hadas who would gladly have joined. At my suggestion those who ministered to Orthodox congregations which would object to the outspoken advocacy of the SAJ platform should not be asked to join, though they were themselves heartily in sympathy with that platform. That kept out Greenberg and Joshua Kohn. All the others were asked individually by me whether they were prepared to enter the Rabbinic Council. Thus was formed the group of rabbis that I hope will cooperate with me in working out in detail the conception of Judaism as a modern religious civilization.

Since then more rabbis have declared their willingness to join. They are Arzt, Levitzky, Arnoff, Silberman of Hartford, Max Davidson of Atlantic City. More are on the way to join.

When I came the next morning to attend the session of the Rabbinic Assembly Adashin told me that the atmosphere was electric with hostility toward me for trying to break up the Rabbinic Assembly and the United Synagogue. When it was learned that about a dozen men



went to attend a conference which I had called Sam Cohen and Louis Finkelstein fumed and raged. They sat up almost till three o'clock in the morning berating me. This time I played the diplomat, not G. forbid in a sinister sense, but simply to save myself from having to waste time quarreling instead of doing constructive work. I called out Finkelstein from the meeting and had a lengthy talk with him in which I made clear to him that the newly formed group did not intend to break away from the Rabbinic Assembly. On the contrary we were anxious to cooperate with the rest of the Rabbinic Assembly and with the United Synagogue the program which stressed the observance of the Sabbath, the dietary laws and the hope for the restoration of Palestine. We felt, however, that the program did not go far enough nor was it sufficiently specific to be of practical guidance. We therefore believed that we had a right to work by ourselves in those matters in our views concerning which the other members of the Rabbinic Assembly did not agree with us. As an evidence of the sincerity of our wish to cooperate with the United Synagogue and Rabbinic Assembly in those aims which we held in common with them I said that we would not admit any one into the Rabbinic Council of the SAJ who was not at the same time a member of the Rabbinic Assembly. Likewise the study groups would have to be affiliated with congregations which belong to the United Synagogue. This concession left Finkelstein without any further grounds for protest. I understand that he was prepared to present a resolution on the floor denouncing the group that I had conferred with. He was prepared to start a rumpus that might have done me a great deal of harm. He still retains, however, a sufficient degree of honesty and may I add, some respect for me who had been his teacher, after all. That has made it possible for me to come to a peaceful settlement with him. But that man Sam Cohen is impossible. He got his share, however, from a number of the men on the floor of the convention in the subsequent sessions.









The Saturday afternoon following a number of the rabbis - about twenty - who had stayed over the for the weekend came to see me at the Rubins'. It was a heterogeneous crowd, including red-hot orthodox shouters like Benjamin, formerly of Cleveland and now of Miami, incompetents like Schatz, and non-descripts. I could not talk SAJ to them. Instead I tried to suggest to them that the Rabbinic Council ought to begin functioning as a professional body which utilizes its annual conventions primarily for the exchange of thought on the various studies which are carried on by the men during the rest of the year. They thought well of the suggestion. I intend to present that suggestion the first meeting of the Executive Council.

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After staying at the Rubins where I was made very comfortable till Friday, I transferred to the Lamports. There too I was made to feel at home. For once I had an interesting talk with Sam in which the subject of the Menorah came up for discussion. I then suggested to him the idea of establishing an endowment fund of at least half a million dollars. I might then be tempted to give up everything else for Menorah work. Later I realized that it would take much more than that to tempt me from the many opportunities which I have at present of getting my message across.

David Bressler who is active as campaign organizer for the JDC crowd and who was made a member of the HUC Board of Trustees in recognition of his helping it to raise its five million dollar fund, was a guest of the Lamports. I know Bressler from the early days of the Seminary when it was situated on 736 Lexington Ave. He and I were then classmates. We have never had any chance to talk to each other at great length since we have known one another. In fact we had an occasion to argue out the question of Jewish nationality, for it was on that score that he refused about three years ago to become a member





of the SAJ. I must say that I got the better of the argument. I suppose, however, that his associations will prevent him from acting on what logically he knows to be the truer course.

A home like the Lamports might have been an influence for culture and Jewishness if Sam were more serious minded and May less given to fads. As it is, their home is more like a hotel where the hosts and the guests take a rest between golf games. If it isn't business, it's golf for both, prizefights for Sam and card parties for May. Neither ever looks into a book. The two little girls are brought up on a regimen of nurses made education plus junior club life. It is remarkable that with all this aimlessness in their existence there is a fine family spirit in their home. In my opinion they owe that largely to the spirit of family solidarity which existed in the homes both Sam and May came from.

\* \* \*

Monday, August 9, 1926

This is the first time that I am writing in this diary, early in the morning, even before saying my prayers - and a Monday morning at that. Behind my doing this peculiar thing there is the mental struggle that has been going on for years and that at times reaches an acute point. It is the struggle for self-expression by means of the written word. I remember as a small boy always looking up with admiration to any one who had the gift for writing. Louis Dembitz<sup>2</sup> was at that time a visitor to our house. From what I now know, he was little more than a semi-educated moron. He used to write some stupid squibs for children. The thought of his having his ideas in print made me look up to him as to a great man and I used often to ask him whether he expected to write books.

But unfortunately although I had this urge to self-expression there was nothing in my home atmosphere to stimulate, nor did any of



schools or even the college which I attended afford me the least stimulus and direction. As a matter of fact I consider myself extremely unfortunate in the kind of so called higher education that I am supposed to have received. My years of adolescence were practically wasted, although I worked rather hard those years in cramming text for the classroom in City College and for the chronic examinations. But there was not one teacher among all the thirty-five or forty who taught me there that took the slightest interest in my mental development. All that they did was to assign so many pages of text to be gone over and next day they would make sure whether I knew it, not for the purpose of helping me out in case I did not know it, but simply to make me. Very often I was given text that with all that I tried to understand it, simply eluded me. That was the case when in my Junior year I was given Dewey's psychology. I had not the least idea what it was all about. They had a young fellow just graduated from college teach it. I dreaded his hour for fear that he would call on me. I lived in fear all of that year. The same was practically true with Economics. They gave us a thin dry little text book and a fat professor named McNulty whom we nicked McBulky. The only redeeming feature in his case was that he seldom called on the students but just wasted the hour palavering. Another source of dread to me was Geology. The man who taught it was Stratford, a big tall strapping man, broad-shouldered, heavy face and Kaiser Wilhelm mustache. The class met in the large anatomy hall or museum. I sat way back in the room in order not to be called and the professor stood on the platform and in a thin little voice mumbled things that I assumed had some reference to the daily assignment. Then all of a sudden he would call on some one, the student said something, the professor nodded his head, raised his hand as though he were taking an oath in court, wrote down some mark on the list of names before him and proceeded mumbling until he called





on the next one, and so on. Once a month my turn came. The subject such as I would have loved to understand it, was a total mystery to me. I would simply repeat something from the daily assignment as a matter of wild guess. Physics I was so fond of that I managed to understand some of the facts mentioned in the book; and the man who lectured on it - mind you lectured on it - was somewhat human. He was a little old weazened man but with a fine small spiritual face, way in the seventies, teaching a class of about fifty young fellows at a time. I was one of the fifty in the far end of the room, though there I often did want to sit in front to gaze admiringly at the instruments on the instructor's desk.

I hated City College then, and I hate it still for having robbed me of my best years. Of course that is totally unreasonable on my part, but when one feels as I do the consequences of an institution failing in its supposed task of educating the young, one cannot but recall the words in Proverbs p 164

And during those miserable years I attended the Seminary whose faculty consisted - as far as I was concerned O of Speaker, Drachman and Jaffe, each more or less of a moron. I learned practically nothing. I recall distinctly the feeling of having forgotten the little knowledge of Talmud and Bible I had come with. The former I had acquired from Father ( ) and the and the latter from a private teacher, Allen, who used to teach me two hours a day and about four to five times a week for the munificent sum of four dollars a month. Father was then earning forty dollars a month. We were a family of four.

(At this point I had to interrupt my tale of wee to eat breakfast.)



I realize fully that if I were actually talented, I would have managed to acquire a thorough and systematic education without the aid of schools. But I feel certain that if I had any kind of guidance during the formative years I should have achieved something to which I would be able to look back with satisfaction.

When I started writing I had not the least intention of drifting into these unpleasant memories. I simply wanted to record what has ~~xxxx~~ transpired during the last few weeks.

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On Thurs., July 8 I resumed my course at the Training School for Jewish Social Workers. I found in the class which was given to me eighteen young people mostly women. Of these twelve will take the full course - 72 hours - and six or five, only 20 hours. I find them to be rather intelligent and eager to learn but with an extremely meager Jewish background. Even the two or three who seem to be somewhat familiar with Hebrew are lacking in knowledge of Jewish life. One young man - Borenstein - who seems to belong to the more able among them, and appears to question the value and need of continuing Jewish life.

So far I have lectured twenty hours (in ten sessions). In that time I covered the Kuzari, third part of the 'Guide' and got as far as the aspect of power in the Rabbinic conception of God. I would have been further with my lectures but I spent considerable time acquainting the students with some of the principal institutions of the synagogue. I believe they gain more by my answering their questions about these institutions than if I were to give them a systematic course on Jewish practices and ceremonies.

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On Monday, July 12, the committee which undertook in Long Branch to proceed with the organization of the Rabbinic Council met at my present home in Far Rockaway. Present were Rabbis Goldman, Kadushin, Schwarz, Landesman and Aaronson. Hoffman sent in an excuse for his absence. Liebreich, I have since learned, has shown the white feather. We decided to send out a letter informing all the seminary graduates of our organization and setting forth as our twofold aim 1) the establishment of study groups; and 2) the publication of a quarterly.

\* \* \* \*

Sunday, September 12, 1926

The summer is over and I am back at my routine work - at least as far as the SAJ is concerned. It was perhaps the most placid summer I have spent in years. The children were at Camp Modin, and Lena and I shared a house in Far Rockaway with my brother-in-law Abe Rubin and his wife. The rent for the house was paid by Lena's brothers in consideration for her taking care of her mother. It is hard enough to get old and feel your powers waning, and become dependent upon children, but to find oneself in a world which one neither understands nor appreciates, and where the little that one sees of the changes that have ~~been~~ taken place appeals as mere degeneration and sin, that must be the height of tragedy. Whenever I see Lena's or my mother at close range I begin to hate the old religion which has so warped their minds and so distorted their spirits as to make it impossible for them to get any joy out of life or to radiate a single ray of cheer and hope into the lives of others. With my mother-in-law's presence creating an oppressive atmosphere, and with the inarticulateness of Abe and his rather "simple" wife, and with no one with whom to exchange a thought or a word for a period of ten or twelve weeks, I could not help growing very moody at times.



Spiritually, aesthetically, creatively, I might as well have been in jail. I tried my best to hide my innermost feelings, but unfortunately I have such a tell tale face that the least emotional stirring is reflected in it. Knowing well that the only way to overcome this unfortunate state of mind is to attend to some task, I worked hard over the traditional conception of Judaism which I am attempting to formulate as part of the larger piece of writing on the reconstruction of Judaism. Whether on account of lack of training or of the necessary ability it takes me ages to write anything. In the ten weeks of hard work I managed to write only about 36000 words. But before I would venture to let that material in print I would have to spend about three months, I imagine, of equally hard work. Not having that much time at my disposal I never get a chance to bring anything to a conclusion for publication. So this is how I stand in the matter of achievement. I know that by all ethical standards I should be grateful for my lot and that it is cowardly and effeminate to keep on whining this way. For once, however, I shall let the devil in me have his way and do the beastly and stupid thing, because I actually feel tired keeping him always reined in. I don't give a damn what any one is going to think of this outburst. I'm just worn out trying to curb my temper and being the moralist and the spiritual preacher, when apparently no one is in the least influenced by all this self-discipline.

I no sooner wrote down the preceding sentence than I realized that I was talking sheer nonsense. The repression which I practice is necessary to the little world in which I move. If I were to yield to my inner promptings there would be an explosion, that would leave behind nothing but the ruins of what is now a cozy little world. The individualism that leads to destruction is the blackest of sins. As far as my own life is concerned there is nothing that I can do to change its general trend. But what puzzles me is how I am to bring





up my children. The main cause of the inner state of maladjustment which I am ever engaged in repressing is the moribund - or what has all the appearance of being such - the moribund condition of Jewish life in this country. Yet as I repress my inward despair and hopelessness as to the Jewish situation I give my children the impression that I want them to live intensely Jewish lives. They fall in easily with the mode and manner of Jewish living that they hear me constantly advocating. My Judith even dreams of helping me with the spreading of SAJ program. If I had only the faintest ray of hope that such a program will ever be adopted sincerely by a group that is likely to perpetuate itself I would consider myself the most fortunate of men. But in the face of the deadly indifference which I encounter in the group I work with I am bound to give way from time to time to utter despondency. What right have I to allow my children to adopt a course of conduct which is as likely to bring them unhappiness as it does me. Yet were I to tell them openly and frankly how I feel I should be making it impossible for me to continue as leader of the SAJ and I should thereby smash up the peace and the integrity that exist in our little family. That is what I meant when I said in the preceding page that there would be an explosion that would leave many fatalities behind.

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Arthur I. Damman of Woonsocket having left the Orthodox synagogue of which he had been a member organized a Woonsocket chapter and congregation of the SAJ. He came twice to Far Rockaway to discuss details of the services for the holidays and plans for conducting a study group. The second time he brought with him a cantor, Marrit, and I spent the entire day noting down the order of the service. What his zeal means I cannot as yet appraise. Before he became involved in litigation brought against him by the government for failing



to make a correct income tax report I would never have questioned his motives. But now I must have further evidence of his sincerity before I shall express gratification over the work done by him to further the SAJ program. Moreover I must also see some tangible results on the part of the group that he organized before I shall be able to overcome my doubts as to the SAJ program being seriously adopted by any group of Jews.

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Beginning Tuesday, Aug. 19 I met a number of the Seminary students and recent graduates in session several times to discuss the sermons for the high holidays. About twenty men attended each of the sessions. They seemed to find my suggestions helpful. I gave them as the main theme for Rosh Hashonah - Self-criticism, and for Yom Kippur - The Need of Standards in Jewish Life. I did not work out the sermons in detail. Preaching on these subjects myself I found I had a good deal of work to do on them. There is another source of discontent - preaching.. Whenever I measure the results by the amount of time and effort expended on the sermons I become thoroughly disheartened. If I worked hard during the last two summers I have at least something to show for that work but of all the effort that I put into sermonizing there is hardly a page that I would consider worth while publishing. It seems that all of the energy goes into working myself into a mood wherein I can overcome the sense of doubt and the pain of self-repression. It takes much longer to achieve a mood which it best lasts about an hour or two than to formulate an idea which may have permanent value.

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I am often thrown into a fit of anger when I see the SAJ building. The ugliness of the structure and utter indifference of the members have made the SAJ House to me a Heartbreak House. Latterly a contract was given out to rebuild the Ark and platform. In the





absence of any one to take a genuine interest in the work the architect made mistakes and when I tried to correct those mistakes I made mistakes of my own. Each mistake means loss of good money. And in the end the whole thing is a makeshift affair.

Not long ago one of the members was offered a proposition to sell the building for \$300,000. That member said he would not suggest selling it for less than \$325,000. It so happened that just as these discussions were being carried on there took place one of the poorly attended meetings of the Board of Trustees. Wishing at the time that I were entirely rid of the SAJ I suggested that they sell the building even if they get \$300,000 and then reorganize themselves entirely by separating the SAJ as a national movement from the SAJ Congregation. I said that if such a congregation were to be reconstituted there would have to be a definite assurance that the activities could be carried on without a deficit. At present the source of income yields only about \$28,000 while the budget amounts almost to \$48,000. In my heart I doubt whether the congregation, once dissolved would be reconstituted. But anything rather than this lingering death in life. But as there was no quorum present at the meeting at which I quietly made the foregoing suggestion, and as there was no offer of \$300,000 forthcoming the situation is in its status quo ante.

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The Rosh Hashono services were attended by a largernumber than I had counted on at this early date in September. Joe Levy estimates that almost \$15,000 was taken in for seats. The price of seats was raised to cover the deficit. The services were conducted on lines similar to those of preceding years. On the first day when we were supposed to start the service at 8:00 we really did not begin before 8:45. I asked Sol Lamport who officiated during the first part to say only *7 168* and . There was no



no minyan when we got to . Most of the people turned up about 11:00. That was when I rose to explain the Mussaph Amidah. It was a running homily on the prayer for life and The talk lasted about forty minutes. The Mussaph service lasting about one and a half hours, I transferred the sermon to the service of the day following.

The second day I also spoke about the Mussaph Amidah for about ~~twenty~~ ten minutes using as a basis the meditation Days of Awe in the Readings. I delivered the sermon after the Amidah. It lasted about 50 minutes. On both days we concluded the services at 1:00.

I introduced the following two changes in the text of the liturgy. Instead of saying when the Torah is held up the congregations says

In I substituted for the words.

This coming Yom Kippur we shall have the psalm sung to the melody of . The words of I consider totally unfit for ritual purposes. Two or three years ago I would not have dared to make the change, although the Board of Trustees had authorized me the very first year the SAJ held Yom Kippur services. On the negative side, no doubt, the SAJ permits me enough of freedom, but as to positive interest in things Jewish - there's the rub.

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Last night I visited Ginzberg. Lena went along with me. During the first part of the evening he listened to the small talk between Lena and Ginzberg's wife. He hardly looked at me, and had not a word to say to me. He sat sideways from where I sat so that he shouldn't even feel the necessity of addressing me. But I over-





looked his boorishness toward me, because I had come for a purpose. I want his help in the work I am doing on Rabbinic Judaism. While I am aware that a good deal of his scholarship is full of flaws and sophistries, yet I appreciate that his learning is so vast that he can well afford to be guilty of many an intellectual misdemeanor. Moreover, in the awful loneliness in which I find myself I am ready to embrace even a procupine of an individual like Ginzberg if he only wouldn't stick his needles into my flesh.

After half an hour of listening to Mrs. Ginzberg's palaver I asked Ginzberg to take me into the library. There, after some questions on one of his notes in Vol. V of his Legends, I mentioned that I had with me the outline of work that I was doing in the concepts of God, Israel and Torah. I then took out my notebook and read to him parts of what I had written. He seemed to be well impressed. On one point in particular I found that I had more exact knowledge than he did, and by no means an unimportant point at that, viz. the relation of *מַנָּה* *לְעוֹלָם הַבָּא* to *מַנָּה* *לְעוֹלָם הַזֶּה*. He first maintained that they were identical and tried to prove it by saying that the manna was promised for the *עוֹלָם הַבָּא*. I said at once that the manna was promised for *עוֹלָם הַזֶּה* because the messianic era and the world to come were different, and phenomena of a supernatural character could take place only in the world to come. When he looked up the passage in the Mekilta he saw that I was right.

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It is after one midnight. Just before going to bed I picked up Fosdick's on Faith. I read the chapter entitled Faith and Moods. My blessing goes out to him for having written that chapter. It just touched the right spot. I am beginning to understand what religion is. And we are the people who gave religion to the world! Not in all the writings of the Rabbis and the medieval philosophers, nor in



those of our modern Jewish teachers, have I read anything so inspiring.

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Tuesday, September 14, 1926

Yesterday morning I attended the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Rabbinic Assembly. I was elected a member of that Committee at the annual convention which took place last June-July. The first matter which came up for action was the appointment of a committee to look into the nature of the courses given at the Seminary. Drob was going to appoint Epstein, Solomon and Levinthal. I suggested that Drob wait with appointments until he inform the of Seminary faculty ~~at~~ the assembly resolution. Possibly the Seminary and the Assembly might appoint a joint committee. Of course the reason I made such a suggestion was that I wanted to obstruct the appointment of the men named by Drob.

When the question of the next convention came up I suggested that the Assembly should aim to make its conventions of such a character that they might serve as a stimulus to literary and scholarly work on the part of the members. A convention should last about ten days. Various papers on studies pursued by the members during the year should be presented; round-table discussions should be held, etc. This suggestion led to my being made a member of the committee on the next convention.

Then came up two propositions which were directed at my efforts with the SAJ Council. One was to work out a series of syllabi for study groups and the other was the publication of a quarterly. Finkelstein and Greenberg were urging the need of the Rabbinical Assembly undertaking these two things. Before I organized the SAJ Council the Rabbinical Assembly never thought of such undertakings, But now, for fear that I might steal a march on them, the reactionaries,





especially Finkelstein and Greenberg, are agitating a counter move. Sam Cohen too, I believe, is goading them on.

I must say that I behaved ~~my~~ very well. I betrayed no resentment whatever and took part in the discussion of these measures as though I were personally in no way affected by them. In my heart of hearts I don't believe the reactionaries can muster any literary forces. But unfortunately I am very sceptical about those who have signed up as SAJ Council members doing anything in the way of writing.

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Last night the SAJ Board held one of its unusually well attended meetings. The business routine was expedited in order that the financial situation might be discussed. I learned that at present the SAJ owes \$125,000 first mortgage, \$93,000 on notes payable Dec. 1 and \$15,000 debts that have to be settled. In view of the fact that the value of the ground is \$275,000 the SAJ has only \$42,000 in equity. Originally \$84,000 was contributed toward the building but that amount shrunk by reason of the deficits. At present we are running on a deficit of \$25,000 per annum. This year they charged the members for the seats on the holidays. That enabled to realize about \$15,000.

After a number of suggestions were made as to how the situation might be met I did not feel that there was much enthusiasm displayed to the possibility of paying up the notes and the outstanding debts. I therefore came forward again with my plan that I had proposed at the previous meeting. That plan called for the selling of the building and dividing the SAJ as a national movement from the SAJ as a congregation. When I struck the note of pessimism in calm and deliberate fashion the Board seemed to realize that heroic measures must and can be adopted to prevent the SAJ from disintegrating. I was surprised to hear even H.L. Simmons speak of the congregation as a laboratory where the SAJ ideas are being tried out and therefore in



need of being maintained. They finally decided that H. Liebovitz should invite to his home the members who were interested in the SAJ by groups and present the problem to them. It appears to me that if that will be done and \$100,000 will be raised, the SAJ might be rescued out of its present mire.

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This afternoon the Seminary Faculty met from 3 to 7. Once more I proposed that the students who apply for admission to the Seminary should be given a test that would determine their fitness to take the work in Homiletics. That is formerly I used to word the suggestion differently. I used to speak of an intelligence test. This would cause Ginzberg to boil up. He took my suggestion as a reflection on him that he could not tell whether the applicant was intelligent. But now that I worded it differently it was adopted and will be given a trial two weeks from today.

Another interesting resolution was to offer a prize of \$40 for the best work in Midrash.

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Wednesday, September 15, 1926

The Teachers Institute staff met this morning. I feel uncomfortable because I know I should conduct these meetings in Hebrew, but I am not sufficiently self-confident in the use of the Hebrew, and therefore, conduct them in English. The burden of the work of organizing the classes and working out the schedule is attended to by Honor. The instructors put in a lot of work in the examinations. Every time I attend these meetings I deplore the fact that I do not give myself over entirely to the work of training teachers. But unfortunately the Seminary in its short sighted policy has kept my salary as well as that of the teachers to a level which necessitates our doing outside work in order to make ends meet.





I had hoped Dinin, the executive secretary, would be able to relieve me of the task of writing every week for the review. He was supposed to start a series of translations from the Hebrew, giving a picture of the new life in Palestine. When I read today the translation which he was going to insert into this week's review I found that it was not English but a literal translation of a poor Hebrew style. I had to get to work and revise the sermon I preached on the second day of Rosh Hashonah. I spent on the revision about four and a half hours.

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A certain Dr. Glushak of 317 W. 89 St. called me up in reference to the organization of the Zionist district in this neighborhood. Fearing that if he were to come to see me he mightn't know when to leave, I went to see him. From the short conversation with him I gather that he was a Russian Jew who got his education in England. Having gotten at the same time a Jewish education, he is a Zionist and is willing to interest others in the Zionist movement. But he is anxious to make propaganda for the movement on an intellectual plane. I advised that the SAJ building be used as headquarters for the district organization. He seemed to know very little about the SAJ. Incidentally he told me that only 3% of the number of students admitted into the colleges of the East were Jews. He viewed the condition with alarm and asked whether the Yeshiva expected to meet the situation by establishing a real university. He seemed to favor every form of educational effort that gave promise of providing educational facilities for the Jewish children and young people. I note in general that Jewish physicians are strongly in favor of a Jewish university.







